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Techniques of Transmission in Kashmir Saivism

by

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Of all the Indian philosophical systems, the monistic system of Kashmir most thoroughly and profoundly explains the various influences of the spiritual master.

Even before the 7th century in Kashmir flourished several mystical traditions--Trika, Kula, Krama, etc.--each possessing its own lineage of venerated masters (sampradaya). Abhinavagupta, who lived in the late 10th century, had as gurus the greatest masters of his age, and was initiated by them in these different traditions. Thus did Shambhunatha, who had restored the Kula system, reveal the Self to him and teach him the practices of initiation.

Abhinavagupta commented upon certain treatises and descriptions of these systems. The compendium of these teachings is to be found in his voluminous Tantraloka (The Light of Tantra), concerned with paths of liberation and composed in Sanskrit verses.

The materials which have served in the preparation of this article have been taken from the Tantraloka; they thus form a part of the teaching of Abhinavagupta, himself a famous master with numerous disciples.[1]

THE ROLE OF GRACE

The relationship between teacher and disciple can only be understood if we are sensitive to the nature of this relationship. Abhinavagupta perceived two classes of humanity: those who are touched by grace and all others. The issue of

teacher and disciple only arises for the former and then, as a function of grace: "The supreme Ruler who forever projects the world in his own energy, is grace; he emanates the world and reabsorbs it. He is supremely free." (Trikanridaya).

According to this monistic system, Siva, by his impetuous, free play, first veils his true nature by dissimulating himself in his energy's ever-renewed forms, and from his own freedom becomes limited and enslaved. With equal freedom it is He who dispenses his grace and reveals himself in his true essence. Whether he mystifies or bestows his grace, Siva's essential nature is nothing but grace. He is the only master, universal Consciousness, the absolute I. His supreme energy--Grace--is perpetually awake in all conscious subjects and constitutes the true relationship between teacher and disciple.

It is the same Consciousness which poses questions in the form of the disciple and responds to them as teacher. As the former, He is imperfect and unclear consciousnesss, full of doubts and uncertainties (vikalpa). As the latter, He is intense and lucid, bringing an end to all doubts (I, 233 and 253 sl.). The appearance of teacher and disciple in two different bodies, being a construction of the imagination, disappears when the single, same Knowledge of liberation illuminates the one and the other.

It matters little that the lineage of teachers stretches infinitely in time, for the Guru is one; when he liberates his disciple, it is in truth himself that he liberates (235).

Siva, the first guru, assumes the form of many masters, divinities, sages, supermen and men alike; to each corresponds a

disciple from the category immediately below. Thus Siva's disciple is Sadasiva, barely distinct from himself, and at the other end of the scale is the teacher and his disciple, both human beings. But everywhere and always, the supreme relationship must be regained at each level: even if the guru is a man, he must be considered to be Siva and oneself, Sadasiva (I, 273).

In this relationship, grace is critical because it permeates a human being and transforms him into a teacher, determining as well various techniques of mystical transmission. The term 'guru' signifies 'heavy.' It is used because the weight of grace draws out the disciple's important and enduring qualities. Without grace, there is no genuine guru. One Tantra declares that if Siva does not grant his grace, the guru in spite of all his efforts cannot instruct the disciple and, even if he could, the disciple would lack vigilance and would not retain that which he had received; or, if he did retain it, that he would lose its benefits by becoming attached to fleeting joys which would consequently halt his progress.

Siva bestows or withholds his grace without regard to the merits or faults of men nor to their knowledge or ignorance. It may be objected that some make efforts to purify themselves or to show themselves worthy, but in fact the desire to purify oneself is already a sign of grace.

Although the Essence is one, it is called Grace inasmuch as it is gratuitous, a living force which encites the heart and spirit, causing vibrations of sound, light and the like. It is

also designated by the name pratibha, spontaneous illumination. This term is essential to Trika, and emphasizes grace's radiation, the brusque awakening of divine power which lies dormant within the human heart. In reality every conscious being is eternally immersed in this beneficent energy, but he hoards it up and utilizes it for profit; in so doing he separates it from its source and deprives it of its efficiency, limiting it, isolating it, orienting it towards the external, subjugating it to particular desires and feelings. The single energy disperses itself into multiple energies, the cosmic body into distinct bodies, the supreme vibration (spanda) into limited movements, and life (prana) into vital breaths. Thus the energy of the Self, infinite and undifferentiated--Absolute I--appears fragmented and dependent.

But as a human being is never really separate from his true essence (which consists of grace), he can regain consciousness of the Self and recover his original liberty. To bring this about, his dissociated energies must join at their center, the Heart. The guru's duty is to encourage this return to the source by instilling himself in his disciples through various procedures: he joins his breath with theirs, awakening the forces which lie dormant in them and allow them to rejoin the undifferentiated breath which returns them to the total life. The guru may permeate a disciple's heart, enciting vibrations of the universal heart; or, merging consciousness with consciousness, he may render his disciple capable of recognizing the Self. Such are three aspects of the return to unity: merging the breaths, awakening the life force (kundalini), and illumination.

THE MASTERS

One can enter grace in three ways: 1) by oneself, without intermediary, when it is awakened spontaneously. This process is denoted by the term pratibhijnanin, the gnostic, master by illumination; 2) through the intermediary of scriptures, wherein a man takes from the scriptures a formula which guides him to liberation; 3) with the help of a teacher.

If Reality is always present, and if grace resides in all beings and can manifest spontaneously, why does Siva reveal himself through teachers and scriptures? Abhinavagupta responds quite simply that this is his wish. He reveals himself both as guru and disciple, both as the facilitator of the awakening and the awakening itself. The teacher does not manifest Reality, he simply frees the student from his ignorance and his misconceptions of duality. "With the sword of initiation, sever the bonds which were once attached to me; immediately Reality shone forth, just as a smoldering fire bursts into flame when the ashes are poked." (XIII, 175).

Among the masters themselves, we can distinguish the initiate--trained by one or many masters--from the pratibho guru who has received illumination without intermediary. But insofar as the disciple is concerned, each may be called sadguru, an authentic master.

Pratibho guru, the master through illumination

Such a master has experienced an intense grace which, pouring over him, has immediately dissolved his ignorance. He

absorbs himself into the divine energy and of his own accord understands the nature of bondage and liberation. He then resolutely attaches himself to the supreme essence. losing himself in Siva and identifying with Him. Liberated while alive, his only task 'here below' is to deliver others.

This illuminating intuition which acts as an inner teacher springs from the depths of the Self and depends neither on scriptures nor an 'outer' guru. From the start, it must be held onto. One must disregard all other knowledge, just as one extinguishes a lamp when the sun rises (XIII, 179). In effect, it alone permits the absolute certainty which ends the doubts which are inseparable from duality. Of what importance is it if this jnanin has not been initiated in the regulations? He possesses true mastery, having received the initiation from his own inner energies when they all converged effortlessly at their center and plunged into undifferentiated Consciousness (1-1).

It behooves this eminent master to accept the help of another master or to re-examine the scriptures so that he might become still more perfect and more certain of his own convictions. He is thereafter called truly accomplished because of the fullness of his triple illumination--the spontaneous illumination joined with the illumination born of his scriptural study together with that of his teacher, with which he finally identifies. In the course of deep samadhi, he has first of all diligently exerted himself, joining his guru's wisdom with his own. Following his teacher through a complete range of mystical experiences, he inherits the vast knowledge accumulated over the

centuries by a lineage of qualified masters (IV, 76-77).

But if illumination is instantaneous, how is it that it can also be developed? In fact, illumination's depth and breadth vary indeed, and it does not always occur in precisely the same manner. Sometimes it strikes like a brilliant flash and never returns. Or, initially vacillating, it may become stronger by degrees, with or without the help of a teacher. Sometimes it appears definitively right from the start, making its "possessor" a pratibho guru.

Thus all masters do not exercise the same sphere of influence: illumination surges forth in some only enough for their own liberation; it permits others to liberate a small number of disciples; it renders a few rare individuals capable of liberating a multitude of disciples. A universal master liberates all of humanity. One can compare them, respectively, to a glow worm which shines only inwardly for himself, to a jewel, to a star, to the moon, and to the sun (XIII, 159 and IV, 139).

One can recognize this pratibho guru by specific signs of which the most important is an unshakeable devotion to Siva. Master of the mantras and the powers which they contain, he also dominates the elements, finds success in all his enterprises, possesses a poetic gift, and understands all the scriptures.

These various powers surge forth when intuitive discrimination reveals itself. His organs and his thoughts purified (and thus perfectly conscious), he can hear and see at a distance. But he ought not to use these powers except to encourage faith and certitude in his disciples. In this way he

will inspire in them the confidence which will aid in their liberation. (XIII, 183).

The Authentic Teacher (sadguru)

The teacher deserving of this name should have perfect Self-knowledge (atman) and should be identified with Siva. Abhinavagupta defines such a teacher beautifully when he describes him as having "ardent vigilance."

In different to the opinion of others, he shuns all ostentatiousness, unlike the hypocrite who presents himself as an illuminated master all the while lacking knowledge of the Self. And the deluding energy of which the hypocrite is victim is produced, like grace, independent of merit or fault. In this, Siva, through his freedom, totally disimilates his own nature and ridicules his proper role; he could not go further in this play! An awakened being, because of his free consciousness, may comport himself publicly like an ignoramus since he scoffs at social convention. Likewise, an ignoramus under the influence of divine energy may act like a guru in a most serious manner, even if he feels only scorn for his comportment. For neither does he confuse himself with his role. His lack of sympathy for his own behavior condemns he who has not received grace (XIV, 6-8).

Further, it is necessary to distinguish carefully a true guru from jnanins and yogins who have not overcome tendencies towards duality and for this reason, do not constitute true masters. There exist gnostics filled with knowledge but lacking in mystical experience, and there are yogi technicians skilled in experience but without knowledge. According to the Kashmir

Shaivites, yogins and jnanins are roughly divided into four groups: to the first group belongs the theologian who is concerned only with theory and can teach the revealed texts which he has studied and understood. Similarly, the yogin initiated in yoga devotes himself to various practices. From the second group arises the gnostic who has a living experience of the treatises, having understood them in their deepest sense through intuitive discrimination (cinta). Since his well-exercised intuition permits him to know the Self, he becomes a zealous yogi who pursues the yogic path with ardor and dedicates his life to it.

But only the gnostic of the third group is a true master,[2] for he possesses the complete mystical experience which at its summit rejoins unwaivering illumination, the essential knowledge of the divine. Even if he has not read the treatises, he knows them instinctually. He is, furthermore, a master in samadhi, from which derives his name, siddhayogin, "the accomplished yogin." Though he has rejected all duality, he retains enough awareness of the distinction between guru and sisya[3] to accomplish his work of liberation. From this order arises a potent master capable of giving numerous disciples knowledge of the Self as well as supernatural yogic powers. Abhinavagupta is perhaps the finest example of such a master.

There exists still another group of yogins and jnanins, but nature very perfect (susiddha). Since they live in undifferentiated samadhi without interruption, for them everything is absolute fullness. They perceive neither bondage nor liberation and cannot, consequently, assume responsibility

for disciples (XIII, 328).

A scripture defines the guru's fundamental task "'O Beloved,' declares Siva to the Goddess, 'he who, from the scriptures or from the master's words discovers what water and ice are, has no further tasks to accomplish, this birth will be his last.'" The guru, in melting the heart of the disciple, returns to their fluid state the parcelled and hard ice blocks of his thoughts. The disciple in confidence allows himself to be carried by the waters of undifferentiated life, following the guru's and Siva's subtle instigations. Both confidence and surrender are on his part indispensible. He cannot participate in mystical knowledge and in the guru's power if he does not absorb himself totally in the guru. This surrender leads first to identification with the master, then with Siva. By the grace of the Self, one's artificial personality is utterly destroyed. Nevertheless, the disciple does not become a slave: he obeys only that which is his essential nature and discovers freedom in the very heart of his most complete surrender.

Methods of Transmission

The Tantras distinguish three kinds of grace: intense, average and weak, each of which is in turn divided, according to its intensity, into three more types (Ch. XIII).

Upon grace depends desire: the aspiration of one's entire being to destroy one's bonds or finally, the desire to liberate oneself while continuing to enjoy until death the pleasures of this world. According to the intensity of this desire, the adept will encounter a very potent guru or a simple _yogin_. Absorbing

himself in his teacher, he arrives at a spiritual level corresponding to his consummate inclination.

The immersion of the disciple's consciousness into the teachers's vaster consciousness is precisely that which enables the initiate to break through his own limitations. We will thus study the various ways in which transmission from guru to sisya occurs, according to the co-penetration of divine grace in master and disciple upon which this transmission depends.

The ultimate Consciousness, which had been obscured, can illuminate itself anew with or without an intermediary: the highest degree of communion[4] between master and disciple is present from the start, translating itself into pure beatitude. Three other kinds of communion utilize various intermediaries, ranging from a simple effort of the will to strenuous practice. The efforts of guru and sisya increase proportionally as grace lessens and their communion becomes less perfect. The first of these is peculiar to Siva, and has as its sole support the will. The second, dependent on the divine energy, has recourse to intuitive knowledge; and the third involves the sense organs, the entire body, the breath, and the mind.

Immediate Communion

In truth, Siva transcends the initiator, the initiated and even initiation itself. How then to speak of the co-penetration of teacher and student? Who other than himself could penetrate into Siva, the single Reality? We must with Abhinavagupta envision this question from a relative point of view, so that obstacles disappear spontaneously according to the intensity of

the grace received:

1. Crushed by the most powerful force of divine energy, the chosen being attains identity with Siva-Bhairava, but forthwith dies or, if he survives a while longer, he, struck by inertia, cannot serve as a guide.

2. When grace, still intense, although to a lesser degree clearly establishes itself at the onset and is assimilated by the body, the ardent devotee of Siva accedes to the state of genius master[5] of which we have already spoken. He instantly discerns the resplendent Reality overflowing with joy, that is to say, the I in which all is reflected.

This grace can also be transmitted by a master who, unmoving at the center of the energy, works by simple spiritual radiation. One who benefits from such grace must be animated by great fervor, unattached to all but the essential, Siva. Two conditions must be met: he must first possess a Self that is very pure, which understands instinctually that to know Consciousness in all its fullness, nothing is required--neither yoga nor concentration nor any particular activity. In effect, since Consciousness shines spontaneously, the only means by which it can be known is simply by its own brilliance. Beyond this certainty that Consciousness is self-luminous, the student must also be convinced that his guru bathes in this ineffable Reality and can confer grace heart to heart without intermediary (anupaya) "as we light a lamp with another lamp." This conviction or intuitive vision (darsana) is essential, for it is by this and this alone that the disciple can accede to the state of his teacher.

These conditions met, the sisya must now hear the words of his teacher (perhaps a simple allusion to Siva or of his own identity with the Self) for this knowledge to be reflected in him as in a mirror; but he must be intensely conscious of his identity with Siva. In this way, after achieving complete identification with his guru, he is absorbed in undifferentiated Consciousness. He rests in the beatitude whose taste remains the same throughout. Such is the best of disciples who, according to Abhinavagupta, "tastes continually complete happiness."

Here the teacher wastes neither advice nor instruction, for a disciple deserving of this ineffable transmission needs no explanation. If he is an inferior disciple, ignorant of the subtleties of mystical life, the guru's function is to silence his "lies," all speech being lies in comparison to the Real.

Grace, still intense even if diminished, proceeds from divine will; it arouses in him who receives it such a desire for liberation that this desire soon leads him to the perfect teacher (sadguru). And this meeting occurs naturally, whether he discovers him on his own or through friends. It is also this grace which incites him to leave an incapable guru for the rewards of a true guru equal to Siva.

Having recognized the Self, the mystic liberates himself (immediately or gradually) and becomes free while alive; he will not be reborn. Since in this case liberation depends upon perfect knowledge, the guru must be a gnostic who possesses complete mastery of the literature and of the categories of reality; a simple yogin would be of no help here. This jnanin

may be an illuminated teacher or an initiated teacher. Like the master of the preceding initiation, he transmits divine favor in an ineffable manner. Let us, however, note a difference between the teacher's attitude and that of the disciple. The guru is no longer entirely inactive; he examines the disciple attentively in order to judge whether he, purified by grace, is deserving of immediate communion. For his part, the disciple is unaware that the master is at the center of Reality, free of ways and means, his personal conviction thus no longer playing a preponderant role. Moreover, the transmission itself presents slight differences: according to one Tantra, the master acts on the disciple like a serpent which by its look alone ejects its venom into the distance.

During this second kind of darsan, the disciple is seated face-to-face with the guru, upon whom he is contemplating, and establishes himself easily in the supreme Reality. The illuminated consciousness of the master passes into that of the sisya by the intermediary of speech, during the explanation of a scripture, or by means of a mystical formula (mantra) which is the intuitive understanding of I, the greatest formula. The guru may still enter his disciple's breath, as we will later explain. Finally, he confers upon the student a liberating initiator which at the moment of death separates him from his vital breaths; his slightest attitudes and words are charged with spiritual force. By one or more of these initiations, he manifests the potency of I to the disciple whose devotion and faith have given total satisfaction; for what is essential is the constant love which joins guru and sisya.

Let us note still a third form of darsana without intermediary, this one also due to intense grace. Certain privileged beings perceive in dreaming or during samadhi accomplished men and women called siddhas and yoginis. Having received from them dicta to execute remarkable acts requiring great courage, they absorb themselves into the inexpressible Reality as soon as they have obeyed.

Communion with Siva

If the disciple cannot penetrate immediately into the luminous Essence merely by the presence of a great master, he must, to soar towards the Absolute, serve as the springboard to his free energy. Rejecting then all that is not Siva, he loses himself in Him. This "via remotionis" gives him access to the cosmic plane wherein the Self, resplendent in its original majesty, is identical with Siva, the source of all energies.

So perfect a communion of Siva, master, and disciple cannot occur except in a sisya who is vigilant, without desire, purified of dualistic thought (nirvikalpa), having a guru who is gifted with illumination. The guru indicates to the disciple that the universe, as divine energy, reflects itself in Siva, universal consciousness, and has no reality but in Him. Thus perceiving the world as a reflection of his own consciousness, the disciple is no longer its slave but its support. The master uncovers other connections between the I and the Universe, whether the I emanates it by means of phonemes or whether it reabsorbs it at the moment when all mantras contract into a single one, aham, the absolute I, identical to universal and quiescient Bhairava.

Communion of Energy

Immediate or divine communion is rare. In general, even with the great mystics whose number, according to Abhinavagupta, is extremely small grace, still strong, is firmly established,[8] but reveals its power gradually over the course of his life.

The merging of divine Energy, master, and disciple must necessarily continue to deepen, and consciousness must be continually experienced. It is thus with the aid of all the energies carried to their maximum that the initiate will liberate himself from his bonds, attaining first illumination and, later, identification with Siva.

On the path of the energy where knowledge plays an essential role, the guru is irreplaceable. For the guru dissolves the obstacles between disciple and Reality: imagination, doubts, lack of confidence. In addition, he reinforces his faith and his conviction. Subtly, he acts upon the disciple's thoughts and unconsciousness, purifying them of their tendencies towards duality. He transforms misconceptions--ideas of enslavement--into their opposite: e.g., certainty of the identity of the Lord (whose body is the Universe) and the Self (its consciousness). Shorn up by the constant practice of contemplation (bhavana), such a conviction eliminates the doubts and the fluctuations which impede adherence to Reality.

The guru encourages in the sisya proper discrimination (sattarka), the power to discern between the essential and the superfluous. Thus, the initiate learns to recognize the characteristics of sound teachings, those of a true master gifted

with intuitive knowledge (pratibha). Similarly, the guru teaches the uselessness of indirect means taken from yoga (control of breath, postures and other techniques) given that on this path all that is necessary is the luminous understanding which issues from penetrating discrimination.

In order to exorcize the phantoms of pure and impure,[9] as well as the moral, social and religious prescriptions or interdictions, the master clarifies what the inner comportment of a yogi should be: every action, even the most humble, serves as an uninterrupted opportunity for consciousness of the Self, taking the place of prayer. Whatever crosses his mind: this is his meditation. To reel about, drunk in the excess of divine grace: this is the mystic attitude par excellence. The offering of all things to the Lord and to him alone: this is true sacrifice. The offering of the differentiated world into the fire of Bhairava consciousness: this is oblation. To perceive the equality of all things: such is his most perfect wish and an intense reflection on his own Essence, the true yoga.

The master further transmits to the initiate the potent formulas (mantras) and makes the energy (kundalini) rise within him. Finally, with the aid of certain postures (mudras), he teaches him to equilibrate his internal experience--that of the Self--and his external experience--that of daily life (Ch. IV).

Communion of the Limited Being

With the path of energy, as we have just seen, discursive thought becomes purified under the power of discriminating intuition. The disciple attains the state of divine energy when

knowledge manifests itself to him. But as grace weakens, the ordinary man proceeds slowly by a roundabout path; the purification of thought then depends upon limited means. Master and disciple will have to work on the level of yoga and of knowledge. The guru is no longer necessarily a jnanin or a sadguru, a yogin suffices for the task. A simple instrument of grace, he transfers it with the help of mantras and the laying of of hands, thus imparting a philosophical and religious teaching directed to the sisya as a whole person. The guru employs various means, of which the highest is meditation. We will mention elsewhere the breath's rising upward, a process which awakens the vital force (pranakundalini), as well as numerous forms of initiation.

THE INITIATIONS

Initiation of the Spiritual Son

If external initiations have as a point of departure the lower level of the individual path, they soon progress to the divine path of Siva. We will give only a glimpse of such preliminary worship.

The guru begins by honoring the lineage of ancient masters, the yoginis, the Goddess of speech, and the guardians of the cardinal directions. He next affirms his authority (by Siva) to celebrate the rite. He meditates next on the sacrificial circle, the objects to be used in worship (a vase, etc.), the fire, and the Self as forming a whole. After casting the offerings into the fire, he addresses Siva: "You who have consecrated me

master, O Lord, accord Your grace to the disciples present here in order to incite the divine energy. Bless them directly Yourself by initiating them in a dream or through the intermediary of a master." Then the guru invites Siva to penetrate into him, so as to be no longer anything but one with Him.

He purifies himself next while reciting a mantra associated with a laying on of hands from the feet to the top of the head. Then he concentrates on the universe within his body; he thus attains the spiritual height that he seeks. Before granting initiation, he places the disciple in front of him, examining the student's dispositions and tendencies. Initiation is granted according to the effects which grace has had within the disciple (XV, 20), for the effects of the ceremony correspond to the common intention of both the initiator and the initiated. It would seem then that the disciple's intention is critical in determining the initiation's outcome, for the same initiation given to several disciples satisfies the desires of those who search for happiness here on earth and procures Self-revelation for those who aspire to liberation (XV, 20-23).

Next comes the most interesting part of initiation, the penetration of the guru's illuminated consciousness into the student's obscured consciousness; this penetration can be understood if we recall that there reigns one single Consciousness, "this great ocean, the infinite domain of illumination."

In an ancient Upanishad, the Brihadaranyaka (I, V, 17), one finds a description of the transmission (samprati) of breath from

a dying father to his son: "When he departs from this world, he penetrates with his breath (his senses and his faculties) into his son. Through his son he keeps a support in this world and the divine breath, which is immortal, penetrates into him." Let us add another example from the Kaushitaki (II, 15): "When the father is about to die, he calls his son. Having strewn the house with fresh herbs and laid a fire....the father lies down, dressed in new garments. When the son arrives, he lies next to him, touching with his sense organs the sense organs (of the father). Or the father may make the transmission, (the son) seated in front of him. He transmits to him in this manner: 'I wish to transmit to you my voice,' says the father. -- 'I receive in myself your voice,' says the son. 'I wish to put into you my breath,' says the father. -- 'I receive into myself your breath,' says the son..." He goes through the same for sight, hearing, taste, actions, pleasure and pain, bearing, spirit, etc., and his son receives each in turn.

The initiation of the spiritual son takes its inspiration from this ancient transmission, for through it, the initiate inherits the person as well as the mystical gifts of his master.

The guru cannot awaken the vital force (kundalini) of the initiate-to-be without having purified his disciple's breath. Towards this goal he makes his own breath enter a point on the median pathway, where exhalation and inhalation balance and subside. Then he infuses this outgoing breath, pure and full of energy, into the incoming breath of the disciple. Next, taking back in his own breath the breath of the disciple, he purifies it

and continues this process, often automatically and without the disciple's perceiving it. A purified breath may be recognized by its vibrating.[10] Capable of entering the median pathway, it forms the rising breath (udana) designated by the term kundalini. When the breath is purified, the guru introduces himself into the disciple in the form of kundalini energy. The methods of this transmission, called vedhadiksa, are described briefly by Abhinavagupta (Ch. XV). They were kept secret over the centuries and conserved in Tantras such as the Srigahavara, the Impenetrable.

A sage who possesses the theoretical knowledge of treatises is not necessarily competent to confer such initiations. It would be dangerous if the kundalini took a descending course instead of rising through the centers. It is therefore critical that the guru be prudent, an expert in yoga, and most perfectly proficient at diving into himself then regaining contact with the outside world.

Fully aware of his identity with the universe and of the universe's identity with Siva, the guru causes his divine being to pass into a disciple whom he loves like a son: breath into breath, thought into thought, heart into heart, this process thus permitting the student to become identified in turn with Siva. First, the guru raises his own kundalini from the lower to the higher centers, piercing in succession the radical center (at the base of the spine), the navel, the heart, the throat, the top of the palate, between the eyebrows, and the top of the head. Next, by methods which vary according to the form of the transmission--mantra, resonance, the rising of breath or of energy or love--he

acts upon the disciple seated before him in such a way that their breathing becomes synchronized. The master's kundalini and that of the sisya rise by degrees in total harmony. At the summit, they bathe in full love; the enslaved man disengages himself from his bonds and rejoices in ultimate knowledge as well as in supernatural powers.

Initiation by Sound (Nadavadha)

In this initiation by sound, the master makes rise his kundalini, which then starts to resonate. This resonance becomes increasingly subtle in proportion to the rise in energy, its apogee coinciding with Self-consciousness. This resonance penetrates into the initiate's heart and, from there, descends to the lower center, then rising again to the higher center. This descent of energy is not at all dangerous, for it is the action of a yogi in samadhi whose vital force has penetrated the median pathway; what is more, the descent which takes place at the beginning of the practice is quickly followed by an ascension.

The resonance is produced at the same instant in the median pathways of both the guru and the disciple, both vibrating to the same rhythm, harmonious like two vinas playing concertedly but at the same time conscious of themselves and of their accord.

In the course of another initiation called binduvedha, the guru arrests his kundalini at the center called bhru, between the eyebrows. Having made it flame-like, he illuminates the initiate, making it penetrate into him at the corresponding center if this is purified, or otherwise to the heart. This

practice awakens only the centers situated between the eyebrows and the higher center.

Saktavedha

In contrast, penetration by the energy is a complete path: all the centers are animated by an intense spiritual force. As the kundalini passes through these centers, they vibrate and turn like wheels, hence their name, cakra. The initiate thus comes to know his various centers intuitively and certainly, rejoices in their various joys and comes to have full power over them. If he comes to be a guru in his own right, he will at that time awaken them in his disciples as well.

Abhinavagupta explains this obscure practice briefly: by means of the breath's upward movement to the higher center, charged with energy (uccara), the initiator becomes identified with Siva, master of the cosmic energy, and takes hold of this energy. The guru stimulates an analogous impetus in the lower center of the initiate, where the energy, still undifferentiated and wound upon itself, unwinds. The divine energy then penetrates into the entire universe effortlessly and automatically.

Bhujangavedha

This process culminates in the initiation of the so-called erect or serpent energy. The universal and supreme energy, hitherto coiled up, unfolds in a cosmic love, as a cobra whose quintuple hood stretches itself out completely, all the modalities of the universe fully unfolded. The kundalini leaves

its place of origin, from which it flashes like lightning and attains, without interrupting its movement, the seat of *brahman*,[11] where it remains forever. In this manner does it enter into the body, just as it penetrates into the Self.

Paravedha

As long as the initiate remains conscious of a process, we may speak of penetration, but in the supreme initiation this impression disappears. Duality and the central pathway (for spiritual energy) disappear. The omnipresent spiritual force no longer passes from one center to another. The various modalities, organs, breaths, knowledge and knower fall unconscious, as does the mind, to make a place for the supreme, unique, undifferentiated love. The disciple having lost the feeling of his body, of his ego, no longer distinguishes himself from this universal co-penetration where he attains the cosmic. Such is the highest initiation (XXIX, 237-254).

Anointing of the Spiritual Guide (*abhiseka*)

The true guru is he who gives full consecration, rendering others capable of initiating and of dispensing grace. By this consecration, the disciple will be crowned sovereign in company of the Queen (Energy, *Sakti*), and will possess not only the illumination that permits him to escape from the cosmic forces but, further, the divine power by which he will become the cosmos' master.

The guru renders investiture only to him who is worthy, who has made vows of obedience, who possesses highly developed

intuitive knowledge, and who wills himself wholly to the adoration of Siva. This initiation is open to all, women, even eunuchs, independent of caste, lineage, etc. It is refused only to them that attach themselves to exterior signs of piety, e.g., to the Shaivite ascetic who covers his body with cinders; this initiation remains the privilege of him whose saintliness remains secret.

The new initiate must beat all men love and compassion, be generous in their regard, explain the scriptures, and initiate without hesitation those who have received grace. Only when he has trained a guru and thus transmitted his power can he, without incurring blame, cease to perform the rites of initiation himself.

The anointment being purely internal, it dispenses with ceremony: offerings, purificatons... The sadguru accomplishes it therefore without intermediary (anupaya): it suffices for him to identify himself with Siva then to contemplate the disciple as identical with himself for the latter to become identified with Reality. He prays to Siva to bless the disciple and to put him in touch, by his grace, with the divine energy: it is this which consecrates him guru.

Having received the anointment, the initiate is again obliged to acquire the power of the mantras and to identify himself with the guru, both in the efficiency and in the knowledge. For six months he breaks these last ties and seeks to become imbued with the efficiency of the mantras (mantravirya), which identifies him with the divinity whose power he wishes to acquire. This done, he returns to his teacher and receives one

final initiation. A subtle essence comparable to a soft sound issues from the heart of the guru in a straight line which rises (erect kundalini) to a crystal white ambrosia. The guru makes this essence rise by the central pathway up to the higher center and, from there, the energy of breath in its plenitude fills the heart of the disciple with this essence. He then recites a fulgurating formula; like a flame this has the ability to melt duality, calming all forms of agitation. The mantra, set on fire and at the apogee of its power, penetrates directly into the heart of the disciple, whereupon the guru takes it back and then introduced it again in a constant back-and-forth movement from heart to heart. When the mantra has worked its effect on the heart of the disciple, he experiences the energy, very subtle, (in the supreme state) rests in the superior center where it joins with Siva. At this stage it permeates the cosmos. Finally, the master puts the inverse process into operation and returns the energy into his own heart. The mantras that the initiate will give to his disciples in turn will be likewise potent (Ch. XXIII).

Initiation of a Dying Person

In this initiation, the disciple leaves his body and at the same time attains liberation. Such an initiation is especially appropriate for a man who, having been consecrated to the service of an insufficiently advanced guru, has failed in life. In this case, if grace favors him at the moment of his death, his family or his friends appeal to a great master--for an exceptional guru is necessary to give this kind of initiation. After being

assured that the man has come to the end of old age or that he is mortally ill, the master gradually purifies all the portions of his body by a special laying on of hands, called "night of universal destruction," which is actually done not with the hands but with a sharpened dagger. It is compared to the fire of the final destruction, for it consumes the disciple's entire body. The guru, concentrating on the fire, must enter with his breath into the body of the sisya by his big toe and not by the nostrils; then by the aid of meditation alone, he disconnects his joints and vitals. The death of the disciple should coincide with the moment of completion of the oblation which closes the ceremony (Ch. XIX).

The extraordinary powers of the grand master appear to know no bounds: he can, it is said, take back grace inadvertently given to a partisan of a dualistic system. His action transcends time and space. He can initiate one who is absent or even deceased if the latter died expresssing a wish to be initiated. The guru avails himself o the "big net" method and catches him wherever he resides: heaven, earth, hell, among the dead, among the various spirits or in some form he will assume in his rebirth (man or animal), and the guru liberates him immediately (XXI).

To convince a liberated disciple that he will not be reborn, the guru performs certain rites: in his right hand he evokes a triangular figure (mandala) representing a fire with resplendent flames. At its center the letter R, the seed of fire, fanned by the wind, symbolized by the letter Y. He takes in his left hand a fistful of grain, which he throws onto the triangle. Reciting

the formula _phat_ so as to consume their generative power, he enters several times into the heart of the disciple, then returns to his own grain-filled hand, focusing upon the grains which he considers as having been burned by the fire of consciousness. Finally placing his hand on the head of the disciple, he declares him liberated while alive. To prove it to him, he plants the grains in good soil; guru and _sisya_ may then attest that they do not germinate. In like manner the initiate will have the certainty that the residues of his previous acts will no longer bear fruit.

The initiation of weight (_tuladiksa_) tends toward a similar end. The disciple, having been entirely purified, mounts one of the scales of a balance and the guru puts a corresponding number of weights on the other. Then, after the initiation, he replaces these weights with a garland of 27 flowers. If the scales remain in equilibrium, it is because the acts of past lives of the "liberated" have lost their weight.

These last two rites are still currently practiced in Kashmir.

Funs 9/14/84

Silburn, "The Three Paths and the Non-Path in Kashmir Shaivism"

For Kashmir Saivism, Reality is Essence or Light (prakasa), absolute and ineffable Consciousness brilliantly shining from the force of its own light. The nature of this reality is bliss (ananda), awareness and complete freedom, and, as such, it constitutes the source of all dynamism and all activity. It further constitutes the manifestation of the universe, which manifestation is presided over by an energy known as sakti, an energy that is, purely and simply, the overflowing of divine bliss:

"A king reigning over the entire earth, feeling the joyous exultation of his power, might, in play, engage in the activities of a foot soldier. It is just in this way that the powerful Lord, in the exuberance of his joy, pleases himself, assuming the different forms (of the universe)."1

MANIFESTATION AND RETURN TO THE SOURCE: DIVINE PLAY

In Paramasiva -- the undifferentiated, inexpressible Whole -- Siva is indissolubly united with the energy. However, in the process of manifestation, the energy appears to separate herself from Siva in order to assume more and more differentiated and specific appearances. The energy, being free, gives rise to other energies. These, she continues to contain undivided within herself, revealing each in turn: first the energy of consciousness emerges; then comes the joy which lies at the heart of the union between Siva and his energy; next unfold the

energies of will and knowledge. By the time that the energy of activity appears, all the preceding energies are contained within it only in latent form. Thus, the free energy obscures herself in order to manifest the universe; the universe's manifestation is its own obfuscation.

These divine energies gradually lose the perfect purity with which they are initially endowed. The energy of desire, or will (iccha) which is originally only an appreciation of fullness, later becomes definitive desire. Knowledge (jnana), the conscious Light of the Self, becomes a limited knowledge, concerned with subject and object. Activity (kriya), which begins as a simple disturbance, a flight into oneself in the fullness of the absolute I,[2] eventually unfolds into dispersed movements and leads to a type of action that enslaves. Life is then crystallized around the ego. And this ego, henceforth separated from the Whole, perceives the universe as fragmented into innumerable subjects and objects, while his various states of consciousness hide from him his only essential being.

In this way, playing at foot soldier, the sovereign becomes completely absorbed in his play. Entirely forgetful of sovereignty, his freedom lost, he becomes enmeshed in his role as simple soldier and imprisons himself in it, prey to impotence.

Lallesvari exclaims: "There is neither you, nor me; neither contemplated nor contemplation. There is only the creator of the universe who became lost in forgetfulness of himself....(59)" (Bh., p. 17)

"Oh my soul, the alluring charm of the world has led you

into division... Alas! Why have you forgotten the nature of the Self? (67)" (Bh., p. 21)

Several centuries earlier, Utpaladeva described this paradox: "Here on earth, nothing is separate from You. There is only joy since all is fashioned by You. And yet, everywhere only differentiation and suffering reign. Oh abode of incomparable wonderment, I honor You." (S.U., XVIII.18)

In explanation of this painful paradox, he writes, "The pearl necklace of Your love is, alas [3] submerged in my impure thought; and though it is innate, the Splendor of its supernatural glory does not shine." (XV.15)

And yet, to those who adore him, Siva offers his own luminous Essence generously and without restraint: "Glory to You, All-powerful Lord, Master of the Universe, You who go so far as to give your Self (atman)." (XIV.12)

What then is the secret of devotion? How does the foot soldier regain his kingship, or the pearl necklace, its supernatural splendor? Regal consciousness does not normally arise from the consciousness or activity of a foot soldier. Nor can Self consciousness emerge from unstable thought or imagination.

However, should the foot soldier encounter a king and recognize him as such, or should the kingliness within him rise up and reveal itself spontaneously, then, in an extraordinary release that uproots him from his ego, his limited consciousness will be destroyed in the emergence of the universal Self. In this dazzling awareness, he recognizes himself as the king that

he is, and that he has always been. It is, then, in the fullness of knowledge and joy that he experiences his newly discovered sovereignty; he exercises it fully and, having once forgotten it in the exhuberance of play, he now appreciates its value.[4]

The energy which manifests the universe is also, in the guise of grace, the agent of its dissolution. The foot soldier who at one time had thought of himself as an isolated being and had allowed himself to be bound to this identity becomes completely identified with the Whole once he regains awareness of his royal nature, the Self.

"The Self, Siva, sovereignly free and whose marvelous essence is Light, at first masks his own essence by his freedom's impetuous play. He then reveals it again in its fullness, all at once or by degrees. This grace is entirely gratuitous."
Abhinavagupta (Bh., p. 24)

Raising up the multiple universe by his creative power, Siva hides from himself. And taking by force the gloomy heart which is his abode, Siva reveals himself to himself.

Free or enslaved, he is Siva always, the marvelous magician of the great divine Game which embraces the universe's whole emission and its return to the source.

The Final Stanzas of the First Chapter of the Tantraloka of Abhinavagupta[5]

330. "The Self is the permanent residence of conscious light; the whole of the energies form its essence. Hiding his own greatness, he assumes the appearance of an enslaved being."

Silburn, "The Three Paths and the Non-Path in Kashmir Shaivism"

The Tantraloka was written specifically to describe the various forms of deliverance.

331. "Mistaken knowledge--a (simple) defect of vision--makes us see things as distorted and unequal;[6] because of this fault, knowledge becomes an impure power despite its [essential] purity."

332. "You who contain all things forcibly take over human hearts. Like an actor, You amuse yourself by hiding the Heart of the Self in a web of tangents."

"One who declares you unconscious is himself unconscious, an ignorant person who wrongly claims to possess a heart. Still, in this unconsciousness exists that which is worthy of praise, for even in this he is like You!"

333. "Every impurity having vanished, knowers of the supreme and of the lowly, they who are identical to Siva's real nature are the masters qualified for mystical study. It is therefore needless to ask them to put afar the task of aversion."

THE LIBERATING PATHS

Saivism is called Trika because it distinguishes three levels of reality: Siva, the Energy, and the individual. These planes correspond to the three levels of experience, upon each of which one energy predominates: the pure knowing Subject, complete in its act of will; knowledge, where cognitive energy reigns; and finally, the level of the object of knowledge wherein activity is exercised.

The appearance of these three divine energies in rapid

succession corresponds to the three moments of the universe's differentiated manifestation, and covers the whole field of human experience:

"No appearance is not established in the triple conscious energy being expressed through: I want, I know, I do" writes Abhinavagupta. (H.A., p. 13)

But the first two moments are so subtle that they escape the notice of ordinary man, who is ignorant of this process because he lives solely on the level of objectivity and duality. The mystic, in contrast, returns to the initial moment, to that consciousness inherent in the original disturbance, divine excitation. And he tries to keep himself there by remaining deeply aware of his own essence.

Trika texts often compare this divine essence to an ocean: "Homage to the ocean of Saivite consciousness, Essence of the conscious Subject!" says one verse (M.M., p. 106). And in describing how Siva, joyfully united with the Energy in the first moment of ardent expectancy, turns to the universe-about-to-be-born, Somananda offers this analogy: "When a violent agitation suddenly appears in quiet waters, one may notice an imperceptible tremor just as one casts a glance in that direction. This tremor is the excitation which emerges from anticipation. (S.D.I., 13-14)

Further development of this analogy may clarify the three successive moments of manifestation upon which Trika is founded. Sometimes, a luminous stretch of profound quiet will suddenly tremble so that the water vibrates. If the sun is full and

strong, the water will seem to break up into countless pieces infinitely reflecting the light (sphurata). This dazzling scintillation seems to renew itself perpetually.

In this same way, the will (or initial desire) is sketched out in the ethereal void of pure Consciousness. It emerges, but is not distinguished from Consciousness, from which it still flows. Consciousness exists in conjunction with light; and all is indivisible in Consciousness as is water and light upon the surface of a vibrant ocean. This too is like an initial glance which captures the universe in a complete, sovereign awareness, prior to cognitive knowledge and known objects. In this first moment, the universe is still not separate from the knowing subject and resides in deep inwardness. This is the plane of the undifferentiated Self, the place of the divine path.

Then the sea's surface undulates, swells and grows hollow; a wave is formed, curling and ebbing. But it is still one with the ocean because it is perceived as a single movement despite its many undulations.

A similar process occurs in the second moment. Consciousness becomes troubled, stimulated by the impulse of desire. Seeking to know, it loses the undifferentiated fullness of the Self and assumes distinctive characteristics. Cognitive energy becomes dualisitic thought, differentiating between subject and object. But it is to thought itself, to consciousness itself, that the form of the object appears. And as with the wave and the ocean, subject and object still possess a single substratum. The Universe is manifest, but internally

manifest, in the one thought only, like an impression of pleasure or pain. This is the second moment, the level of knowledge, the plane of the path of the energy.

There comes a time when a tempest stirs up the sea. Enormous and violent waves break one by one, fringed with spray, towering and crashing down, seeming to contain in themselves the entire force of the ocean, from which they ultimately part to subside and die upon the shore.

This constitutes the third moment, when man perceives the universe to be outside of himself. He feels isolated, tossed about on the crest of the waves or dashed by their rolling force; helpless, he is lost in the multiplicity and violence of the waves which hide from him the unity of the ocean and the calm of its depths. At this level subjects and objects are clearly distinguished. The world appears externalized, differentiated, the object being far removed from the subject and from knowledge. This is the level of the known subject, the plane of the path of activity.

Despite the various characteristics of its surface, one must remember that it is always the ocean which we contemplate; beneath the multiple forms of Consciousness, the Essence remains. To rediscover this Essence, the individual who is isolated from original Consciousness must recognize first his identity with the wave, then with the single movement of the ocean that sustains both its swelling and its subsiding--that is, with the energy--and finally, with the limitless sea, undifferentiated Consciousness.

If the three divine energies correspond to successive

moments of the universe's manifestation, they also form the three main paths when the universe (or consciousness) returns to non-differentiation. These paths serve as the means of return to original Consciousness, each using as springboard its characteristic energy.

Regarding the highest of the energies, that of Consciousness, one cannot truly speak of a path. This involves pure anupaya, the non-path. If the energy expresses itself as joy, what access "without a [particular] way of being" comes down to is a simple repose in joy. If the will surfaces, the eminent path of Siva presents itself. When the energy of knowledge dominates, the path is said to be that of the energy. And if activity is clearly manifest, it is the path of the individual.[7]

In the direction of the return, the energies blend together in the divine Essence. When the three paths are dissolved in joy, this joy is perfected and the original freedom is definitively recovered.

Stanzas of the *Tantraloka*: The Triple Path

"While to certain conscious subjects the Omnipresent reveals his own Essence in its fullness, to others he reveals it gradually." (I., 140)

"The revelation of his single, omnipresent Essence is supreme Knowledge for the individual. Other knowledge, inferior in nature, offers numerous appearances. It may unfold by the direct path (the divine path), or by indirect paths which proceed from

it and become differentiated in a variety of ways." (141)

Divine Path or Path of the Will

"That which occurs as an immediate flash, fully revealing the field of pure universal awareness of the Self, is known as the divine path. It appears at the brink of knowledge in the reality of complete union, and is in no way characterized by differentiating thought."

"It is divine nature that is revealed, with intensity and complete clarity. It appears to a few extraordinary beings, without their having to pursue a goal, for their eyes are wide open." (The commentary states that this path is characterized by the uninterrupted expansion of the energy of the will.) (146-147)

Path of Energy or Knowledge

"If one attains universal, undifferentiated awareness of the Self through sustained intellectual pursuit, this is known as the cognitive path. It is achieved by repetition and prompts a certainty based upon such purified thoughts as 'this universe is the Self.'"

Path of the Individual or of Activity

"In contrast is the path of activity. It is considered to be effectiveness which operates according to the requirements of objective reality, and which corresponds to the functioning of this knowledge."

"But in terms of liberation, the differences between these paths does not make one preferable to another, the goal of

all being one--Siva himself." (149)

"The distinction between path and goal is based on an error which arises from gross knowledge and which is inherent in the energy of activity. In creating diversity, it is the sole cause of both bondage and deliverance." (145)

GRACE AND THE TRIPLE ABSORPTION

On the one hand, it is true that perfectly disinterested activity, knowledge, and love lead to liberation. On the other hand, evolution is entirely different in each of the paths. One can move from one path to another and reach the higher path if, on the way, grace abundantly intervenes. For everything depends upon the degree to which grace is granted. Thus, in the lower path grace smooths the way with delicate touches. Already stronger in the path of the energy, grace clarifies the intelligence so that it becomes intuitive and penetrating insight. In the higher path, a very intense grace arises from the depths of the Self, from the intimacy of the soul. The effect is such that grace diffuses throughout the entire person, who is consequently exalted. But in the Essence exempt from paths (anupaya) grace no longer exists; glory alone reigns.

According to Abhinavagupta, intense grace stems from the word of the guru; average grace, from the word associated with intuition, and from faith in the scriptures. With the help of these three elements, together or separate, "the clouds of doubt vanish and we touch the feet of the All-Powerful, who is like the

sun which dissipates darkness and whose glorious splendor shines in the firmament of the Heart." (T.A. II., 49)

Thus, from grace come the characteristics of the paths, the initiations, the nature of the practices, the efforts, the procedures, the duration of one's progress, the more or less definitive conquest of objectivity, and the ensuing liberation.

Thus, he who follows the individual path reaches sovereignty only after death, when he is free of misunderstanding. For while he is not ignorant of his power, because of the residues of ignorance before death, he still identifies with his body in the course of his activities (although not during samadhi). However, he is no longer a victim of illusion, for he has recognized his own essence, like the man who, having discovered the secret of a magic trick, is no longer fooled by it, even as he watches its performance.[8]

He who progresses along the path of the energy, by applying himself to mystical practices (bhavana), recognizes his identity with the Lord, with his own body, and with all that exists. He revels in the divine qualities of this life, but he does not experience its fullness, for he will completely realize the universal Self only after the dissolution of the body, when the limitations of the body and the breath disappear.[9]

Differing as they do in general orientation, in the goal pursued, and in the effort undertaken, a comparison of these paths will underscore the unique elements of each towards deliverance--the freedom of great space, the Bhairavian immensity.

Let us imagine a dense forest that hides the sea and

several individuals whose desire to reach the sea varies in intensity. The man of action has heard about the ocean and makes great efforts (yatna) to clear a path in the forest, all the while forgetting his goal. Thus, he tries several tracks, cuts down trees, jumps over ditches, goes around obstacles, retraces his footsteps. He is pleased by the footpaths he has opened; he stops for a while, and then courageously moves on. Finally, his thoughts calm, and having found a more direct path, he can either rest, happy and assured, or continue on and enter into the path of knowledge.

The man of discernment gives himself to the cognitive energy. He searches for a good path, hesitating at the crossroads; he moves from one fork in the road to the next toward the sea, which he glimpses more and more clearly. If he meets a true guide, he will no longer lose his way. He slowly acquires the experience necessary for informed choice and clear thinking. Henceforth, he moves forward with zeal and ardor (prayatna).

The superior path of Siva involves a simple, pure intention. The traveler of this road is the impatient and intrepid being who sees the ocean from the top of a hill and moves unwaiveringly towards his goal with all his being. Without trying to discern or worry about the road, he overcomes all obstacles, guided by a single impulse--desire (udyama). Rising above himself, he is guided toward the sea and plunges into it unhesitatingly.

In the concentrated path of joy, there is no forest, there is no path; one simply enjoys the freshness and the immensity of

the ocean.

Finally, in the absence of all paths, the infinity of the sea is immediately recognized, and one is completely identified with Absolute Consciousness.

Absorption in the Quintessence[10]

A triple absorption[11] corresponds to these three paths when the Lord, by his grace, merges into the heart of the yogi and the yogi merges into the Lord. Such is absorption, the key to the vault into which all paths merge.

"(The mystic) who devotes himself to absorption knows the Self to be identical with the Lord and his own energies of knowledge and activity to be no different from himself. Knowing this, he does all that he desires, even if he still resides in his body." (I.P.v. IV., 15)

Abhinavagupta states: "This absorption into Reality is the only thing that matters. Every other teaching aims only for this goal." But he later adds, so as to eliminate any ambiguity: "Upon the body's death, the Lord alone remaining, there is no longer any question of absorption: Who would one penetrate, where, and how?"[12]

In effect, the interpenetration of God and the soul can go so far as to mean identification. It is a matter, then, of perfect absorption, without a path or a particular way of being,[13] of identity with Absoulte Reality.

The triple absorption is what determines the three liberating paths, according to whether one becomes absorbed in the energy at its source (the will), or in cognitive energy, or

finally, in energy as it is expressed in activity.

The 34th chapter of the Tantraloka is devoted to absorption, deemed important because it was revealed by Siva himself. This short chapter includes only the following stanzas: "The moment has come to show how one enters into the Quintessence. (According to the individual path) having entered more and more profoundly into the divine state, one rests at peace, close to the Essence. Then, abandoning this path completely, one takes refuge in the abode of the energy. Finally, one arrives at the dwelling of Siva, where our own essence reveals itself quite clearly. Such is the nature of gradual absorption."

"But whoever has the good fortune to enjoy the nature of Bhairava, abundant source of the great rays (of divine energies) radiating from Consciousness, it is independent of any Path that he will finally become immersed into his own eternal Self, imbued with universal Essence."

"There, we have absorption into the Quintessence as the Lord has shown it to be."

According to Abhinavagupta, all ways, samadhi included, tend toward perfect absorption (called integral samyag avesana) in the course of which the Self, thought, the body, and the entire world merge spontaneously into ultimate Reality and become identified with it.

Absorption Belonging to the Divine Path

This divine absorption has only to do with one who is

detached from all preoccupations,[14] for this being, writes Abhinavagupta, worries about nothing, and is not subject to dualistic thinking. Then, after a great awakening,[15] he is suddenly established in a perfect attunement with profound understanding, that is, understanding of universal, undifferentiated Consciousness. And it immediately attains its full expansion. Such an illumination, he says, one grasps immediately and forever. Through this interpenetration of Siva and his adorer, the latter becomes identified with the supreme Essence, due to the inseparability of Siva and his highest energy. The dependent ego is annhilated in the energy of will--the source of the other energies--and even without having recourse to samadhi, consciousness is immediately absorbed in Siva in a union as spontaneous as it is unexpected. "Beyond all intellectual certitude, that which is truly worthy of being known, having blossomed in a perfectly pure heart, remains there permanently. It subjugates the knowing Subject; ~~which is~~ reflected in the mirror of the intelligence, and~~, at this moment,~~ is gradually revealed in all its glory." (T.A.I. 172-175)

At the moment of this total absorption into Reality, the Self, thought, the body, and external objects all abandon their objective nature and become identified with the Lord. If at death this absorption is perfect, only the Lord remains.

Absorption in the Path of the Energy

The absorption achieved by concentrating (cinta) with one's heart upon some entity, without recitation, stems from the energy.

The heart presents itself here as intelligence, thought, and the feeling of "I", the respective operations of which are certitude, synthesis, and wrong conviction. Despite the illusions that it holds because of these operations, this path leads to the undifferentiated knowledge of the divine path. In fact, the purified vikalpa contains a knowledge and an activity of great intensity, although still subject to limiting conditions.

It suffices, then, to put one's energy ardently into dissolving all limitations so that the energy, pouring forth, brings up internally what one desires: identity with Siva.

This state of energy is at once differentiated and undifferentiated: differentiated because it contains distinct thoughts, and yet undifferentiated because it requires no external means such as recitation and other similar practices.

Absorption in the Path of the Individual

Absorption due to recitation, to the activity of the organs, to mediation, to the phonemes, and to concentration on the vital points is properly called "individual." (I. 170)

Abhinavagupta explains: "individual" clearly signifies "differentiated." Although this path is made of intellectual certitude which is part of dualistic thought, it also leads to the undifferentiated.

These last two absorptions are therefore directed towards the ocean of the undifferentiated, without which they would not exist.

Even if it is true that undifferentiated consciousness is

not dependant upon differentiated thought, the individual path nevertheless allows attainment of the divine path's non-differentiation. For even though it begins by differentiated thought, it raises itself to the state of non-differentiation (nirvikalpa) by means of the progressive purification of thought.

Abhinavagupta gives an example of undifferentiated knowledge first in the divine path, then in the lower path:

"An expert in precious stones can evaluate a great number of stones at their true value even if they are shown to him at night and just for an instant. Such purity of consciousness is due to the practices of past lives, or to the will of the Lord, which nothing can restrain." (184-185)

A jeweler with little experience is at first ignorant of the value of precious stones; however, after repeated investigations, utilizing procedures to ascertain their true value, he finally attains undifferentiated knowledge which has no need for procedures. He is then declared an expert in precious stones." (229)

"Whoever gains access to the undifferentiated, whatever be the path that allows him to enter into Reality, by this very path will he become identified with Siva."

"A very pure heart whose light illumines the resplendent summit identifies with Consciousness, supreme Siva, because of this same light."

"Such is the true path, an expression of the eminent energy of the will, an absorption called divine, which Sambhunatha as well as his disciple Abhinavagupta experienced." (211-213)

Silburn, "The Three Paths and the Non-Path in Kashmir Shaivism"

In relation to conscious light, how are God, Self, and universal energy fused by means of the three paths? Since eternal light is nothing less than total, whatever the path followed, illumination must be the same in each of the paths; only its power, the degree of freedom attained, and its duration differ. One can therefore distinguish between a transitory state, a more lasting state, and the immutable nature of the pure Subject. Its variations reflect the way in which the mystical experience, called the "Fourth" (turiya) state, expands in the three ordinary states of waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. Having filled them completely, it alone remains, all ordinary states having ceased.

An individual of the lower path rarely discovers the Fourth state and cannot at will regain an illumination which is as elusive as a lightning flash. Despite his efforts, he cannot maintain himself in that state, either during sleep or in wakefulness (while he is absorbed in various activities). Coming out of rapture, he falls back into dispersion, objective vision regaining its control. Even though his empirical, individual consciousness is unified and calmed, it has still not disappeared. Self, energy, and Siva remain distinct, their fusion having been only momentary and therefore imperfect.

In the path of the energy, this absorption is deeper and more stable, and the mystic perceives the divine presence not only in his illuminated heart, but in all things. Soon he sees both himself and all things in Siva. Siva, the universal energy, and his own Self fuse more and more completely as he experiences

the Fourth state permeating not only the three subjective states (as in the preceding path) but throughout the ebb and flow of the universal life in which he henceforth participates. Though he enjoys the Fourth state frequently and maintains it for long periods of time, it is still only a state. At the height of the divine path, there is no longer a fourth state distinct from other states, but a single mode, pure Science being definitively recognized as the immutable Subject:[16] in other words, the co-penetration of Siva, the Self and the energy is accomplished.

The treatises of the Trika system always describe these paths beginning with the highest,[17] like a cascade of powers decreasing as they move farther from their source. If grace's intensity diminishes, the effort required of man must increase proportionately.

In the path of Siva the efficiency (virya) is that of the supreme Subject whose Consciousness is undifferentiated (nirvikalpa). Supreme, it is the source of all capacity and thus constitutes the efficacy of the mystical practice (bhavana) in the path of the energy. Later on this efficiency, lessened, becomes the power of meditation, the culmination of the path of the individual. And so it is up to the final practices of this path.

However, for the reader's convenience, we will follow the inverse order, beginning with the ordinary man who has limited knowledge. An unending series of shadows unfurl upon the bright surface of his consciousness. The commotion is such that, not even for a moment is he aware of the Self. His externalized and

fragmentary experience keeps hidden from him the universe as it is in its essence; and the Lord appears transcendent, external, unreachable. He is ignorant, in fact, of the Fourth state, and of the subtle inwardness of absorption, because it is perpetually covered and veiled by the gross states of dreaming, waking, and deep sleep.

THE PATH OF THE INDIVIDUAL OR OF ACTIVITY

The lower path is for the yogi whose existence is defined by the structure of perceptible things. He lives on the level of duality, although he tries to disengage himself from it. He has not renounced all concern for his personal well-being, and remains subject to desire and its upheavals: attraction and aversion. To escape desire, he aims at the true knowledge of the path of the energy, to which the lower path leads.

As the grace available to him remains weak, he surmounts with difficulty numerous obstacles. He courageously tries to end the impurity of utilitarian action and the illusion of duality for these impurities restrict the conscious light to only that necessary to satisfy the needs of limited activity.

He struggles to free himself from doubts and conflicts, and to calm those tendencies centered on the ego in order to regain and exhibit noble and disinterested activity, and to attain its source--divine energy. To do this, he develops concentration at different levels: the body, the breath, the voice, and the intelligence. He recites sacred formulas, gives himself to sonorous articulation, to breathing exercises, meditations, and various contemplations.

He thus purifies his various activities of their tendencies toward dispersion while remaining vigilant in the course of all his occupations, and in waking, dreaming, and deep sleep. But as this purification does not extend to his superior faculties nor

to his unconscious tendencies, his bonds will be broken only after death.

Slowly he succeeds in turning himself from the external and from his preoccupation with things. With rapture, he discovers the internal life and his whole being expands there in peace and happiness; his knowledge becomes pure and his heart burns with vitality.

But he only touches Reality: his experiences, as extraordinary as they may be, are fleeting, fragile, and his devotion to God remains tentative. Though he begins to raise himself above contingencies, he is not truly freed from his individual ego.

The dangers which await him are numerous indeed, coming in the form of attraction: to the pleasures of the world, or to supernatural powers. Because he lacks vigilance and ardor, he falls easily from the Fourth state. He advances imperceptibly to the purified energy, and then to the state of Śiva with which he becomes one and the same.

PURIFYING OPERATIONS

At first, the yogi's purifying progress involves the organs (karaṇa) because he is moving towards total mastery of the mystical life with all its various faculties. The individual, by definition "one who is tied to his organs"[18], these same organs must thus lend their support to his liberation.

Through this practice, all preceived objects are subordinated to knowlege, filled by it, and transformed in it. This knowledge, becoming in turn limpid and transparent,

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reaches the knowing Subject which perceives everything in the mirror of immaculate Consciousness.[19]

But in the lower path, when the yogi regains contact with his own conscious essence, then his sense organs, his breath, and his intelligence are purified and can thus assist him in the attainment of the Self. In his Tantraloka (v. 10-19) Abhinavagupta explains how:

If intelligence oriented towards unconscious objectivity continues to discriminate between the forbidden and the permissible, it leads to contemplation when it becomes absorbed in Consciousness. Similarly, the breath (prana), which is naturally unconscious and divided becomes a spiritually rising breath as soon as it imbued with consciousness. The unconscious body, whose activity is impure, expresses itself through purified organs when it is illumined by Consciousness.

So, in sum, the exercises of the lower path serve to do away with the determinism that stifles consciousness on the level of the object and to dissolve the unconsciousness that inhabits the body, the breath, and the intelligence, so that only Consciousness reigns.

Therefore, one endowed with intelligence, breath, and body can transform his differentiated thoughts into perfect Consciousness by turning inward.

THE YOGANGA OR LIMBS OF YOGA

One might question the value of yoga practices in the eyes

of Abhinavagupta and his teachers. Their position is clear, and requires precise distinction between the different levels of realization. "The exercises that lead toward liberation are for people who function under the influence of attraction and repulsion and cannot enter into the divine Essence made of grace. Necessarily limited, they do have recourse to exercises and to a variety of practices."

We will see that in the higher path of the energy, these disciplines, including samadhi, must be rejected because they are incapable of revealing Consciousness. The only exception is the knowledge which arises from discrimination.

As for the yogi whose intelligence is very sharp--in contrast to the great yogi who need take no intermediate steps to enjoy supreme power--he must struggle from one power to another until he reaches their source, the absence of discursive thought. Nevertheless, though all of his means may be devoid of the ultimate power (virya), they are not without a certain strength, just as a eunuch who is without virility (virya), is not entirely bereft of force, like a corpse. (T.A. V. 158)

Hence the different limbs of yoga, from the easy postures to samadhi, in certain tantras assume a meaning different from that expressed in the Yogasutras.

Thus asana is defined in the Yogasutras as "an easy and stable posture, for in it effort is suspended and the experience of unity arises such that the yogi can escape contradictions."(1, 46-48). But in the Netratantra, asana becomes the posture wherein one "becomes established in the junction between the

inhalation and the exhalation, in the center of the breath. There, established in perfect vigilance, one experiences cognitive energy." (VIII. 11, 18)

In the Yogasutras (49-53), pranayama, breath control, is a pause between the inhalation and the exhalation. The breath's outward, inward, and suspended movements are regulated as to positioning and frequency, so that the whole movement of the breath becomes long and subtle. The fourth pranayama[20] refers to the external and internal domains. Ultimately, the veil covering the light of (discriminating knowledge) slowly diminishes and thought becomes capable of concentration.

The Netratantra specifies a much higher level: "true breath control in the inner path aims to end gross forms of inhalation and exhalation and, further, through the breath inside the breath, to obtain the supreme vibration that goes even beyond the subtler one. Internalizing the breath during the rising of the energy udana known as kundalini, one reaches a point of being continuously in the Center, incapable of falling from it."

Such an elevation of the inner breath occurs only in a yogi in samadhi, having attained the level of pure conscious Subject.

Thus pranayama no longer appears to be control of the breath in a perfect quiet that protects against the rumblings of the external world. Rather, it is the power of Life itself, as Mahesvarananda states so well: "Whether the power is active or at rest, if one is to recognize one's own Reality, one must understand breath control to be the dissolution of external events." (43) In the eyes of the yogi, events no longer exist, in the sense that they no longer unfold outside of the Self--they

are no more than the play of his own power.

Pratyahara is withdrawal of the energy of the organs. According to the Yogasutras (54-55), sensory functions follow the nature of Consciousness when they are no longer in contact with specific objects. Complete mastery of the senses proceeds from this withdrawal. In the Netratantra, the withdrawal that breaks the bonds connected to becoming does not involve the organs relative to external objects. It has instead to do with inner organs that have become infinitely subtle as a result of properly understood pranayama. The objects of these inner organs are whirlwinds of extraordinary qualities, sounds, and lights, surging up without external cause and perceived only by the heart. To turn from these organs and to penetrate into the supreme resting place by means of one's own heart--this is known as withdrawal, the means by which one breaks the bonds of becoming.

Concerning the higher limbs of Yoga, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi--the Yogasutras give the following definitions: "concentration is the fixing of Consciousness on a single point. Meditation is the unification of thought upon this point. When Consciousness empties itself of its own form and manifests as the thing in itself, this is samadhi, absorption." (III. 1-3)

The Netratantra reverses the order of the two first limbs, beginning by defining dhyana in the sense of meditation: "The supreme Reality cannot be an object of meditation. Awakened beings know that true meditation is beyond qualities of thought; it is meditation (the gathering together of oneself) upon supreme

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Reality as (pure Subject), and of which one has an immediate experience."

When he discovers the Self in his own heart, the yogi passes on to concentration (dharana): "When the supreme Self is perpetually 'fixed' (dha), such a 'concentration' becomes an obstacle to the bonds of becoming." Through it one forever "retains" supreme Consciousness.

Then follows a samadhi of cosmic proportions: "The Consciousness of sameness in oneself and in others, in the elements and in the entire world, the realization that 'I am Siva, I am without-second,' this is when one recognizes the supreme equalization, that is, samadhi or absorption into absolute Reality."

CONCENTRATION OR MEDITATION (buddhidhyana)

The culmination of the path of the individual is a meditation which begins intellectually and ends in mystical contemplation, leading to the quieting of and repose in the heart (cittavisranti).

The Vijnanabhairavatantra defines true meditation: "In truth, meditation is an unshakeable intellect, without appearances or solid foundations. Images of divinities that have bodies, organs, faces, and hands, have nothing to do with true meditation." (146)

And in verse 49 Siva speaks to the Goddess Energy: "Oh Fortunate One, She who, senses annihilated in the heart space and spirit indifferent to all other things, reaches the middle of the

tightly closed section of the lotus, She will attain the supreme favor."

For according to another Tantra: "If omnipresent Consciousness fills the entire body, it has the ocean of the heart lotus as its eminent residence."

If one is to penetrate into the heart, the breath must come to rest outside the reach of the senses, between the two movements of inhalation and exhalation. In this repose, which lasts only an instant, these breaths balance then cease, producing the opening of the lotus of the heart." (P.H., p. 217)

Abhinavagupta provides a detailed explanation (T.A., V. 21): one who knows the Reality of the Self sees this consciousness directly in the heart as he moves from the external to the innermost recesses. This process is like removing one by one the petals of a kadali flower, with its two intertwined sections. One then attains the center, the perfumed pollen.

During this meditation one progresses from the gross to the subtle, then to the supreme, the sanctuary of the heart where the Self shines forth.

There the all-penetrating Consciousness reveals itself, for Abhinavagupta states:

"It is in the great sacrificial site called the "heart" that the fire of the powerful Bhairava burns profusely, as one rubs together two sticks of wood.[21] One concentrates solely upon the friction that unifies all triplicity--moon, sun, and fire, symbols of the inhaled, exhaled and rising breaths, or of the known object, knowledge, and knowing subject. The resplendent

flame of Bhairava--fire or pure Subject--is endowed with an intense energy that expands at the Center. With its help, one recognises that all the triads of energies perpetually surging forth are fusing in a complete non-differentiation of subject, object, and knowledge." (22-25)

The yogi lives in the Fourth state from the time that duality is no more. From this contemplative state he turns toward the external world and, through his purified faculties, begins to perceive Siva even in his ordinary activitues. He then applies himself to the practice of the wheel of conscious energies:

"To live in the undifferentitated, even when differentiation is taking place, this is the supreme and sudden 'roar' of a yogi." (V. 127)

"When the yogi has immediate experience of the undifferentitated Self, radiating from conscious light, his internal organs of knowledge--thought which rests in its own essence, as well as all the sensory organs which depend upon it--lend him their support for penetrating into the ultimate Self that is revealed in all its splendor. At this moment the objects of the senses and the impressions of pleasure and of pain appear to the yogi in great intensity. Enriched by the rays of his fully expanded organs, he devotes himself to making all that appear clearly but without differentiation. Oh! How worthy of seeking is such a Reality!"

He who meditates without interruption upon the process of creation, maintenance and reabsorption as identical to his own consciousness becomes identified with Bhairava and thus realizes

the Self as the light of the Wheel of conscious energies.

Through the Wheel of fire (whose center is the heart), the yogi expands his awareness throughout the objective world. He does this fleetingly as emanation, then in a lasting manner as knowledge, and finally reabsorbs it as the knowing subject. In order for this Wheel to reach its total undifferentiated fullness, the yogi must dissolve the remaining permeations of duality. He therefore contemplates his faculties as imbued with divinity, as the wheel slowly calms, finally becoming pacific.

At the beginning, the yogi concentrates on the wheel in order to perceive its whirling throughout his various activities. If he hears a sound, for example, unshakeable as an indivisible central axis, he must penetrate to the heart without losing Self-consciousness. (M.M. 53)

THE SACRIFICE OF THE OBJECTIVE WORLD

The many efforts of the individual traveling this path lead to the great sacrifice, wherein all the impressions of the knowable world are poured like an oblation into the brazier of the supreme Energy. The ensuing nectar fills the universe with vitality and bliss. Abhinavagupta writes, "without this oblation, the universe is torment." (V. 66)

But to offer this sacrifice, a yogi must renounce his individual being. He must perpetually contemplate as identical to the Lord the divine energy in all its fullness. This is the beatific union of Siva and the Energy that gives rise to the

universe in the form of nectar, the same and only nectar that is both within us and outside of us.

For the yogi to penetrate into supreme Reality and become established in the state beyond acceptance and rejection, he must perceive the universe in its non-differentiation and attain the quiet of his own essence. This is possible with the help of the rapture that he experiences within his own consciousness. It is accomplished by abandoning the piteous state that comes from intentional activity--that is, activity tied to objects because of their utility, or to impressions of pleasure etc. (74-76)

The path of the individual leads to that of the energy when, his organs stabilized, the yogi is not even aware of concentrating on the extraordinary wonder that delights him:

"All the sensory agitations disappear once he is united to the great and unforeseen wonder. His completely unified organs are like a wheel whose spokes flow forth and at whose heart is a great abundance. And he remains there. He is unburdened by concerns and perceives things clearly. The Consciousness he attains is such that its sparks are sufficient to reduce to ashes the abode of becoming." (84-85)

He begins to have a glimpse of the universe in its non-differentiation, transformed, as it were, and recognized as the precious marrow of pure Consciousness.

Abhinavagupta states that "these beings experience true rapture extending into their daily activities. They remain in the Self."

When this contemplation consists solely of a practice with its vigilant exercises, it is no more than the path of activity.

With the path of knowledge, however, the operation of the energies is spontaneous. According to one verse, "wherever the yogi goes, all the wheels turn around him like a swarm of bees around the queen bee." (T.A. V. 30)

At its highest level, this contemplation leads to the divine path: "He who dissolves the universe into his own consciousness at every instant and produces it again is forever identified with Bhairava. He is free to produce and dissolve the universe. Consciousness reveals itself to him in all its glory." (V. 36)

The lower path offers the deeply calmed yogi successive stages of extraordinary peace and bliss in equal measure to his discovery of the inner mystical life. He need not leave his quieted heart in order to come into contact with the external world. He can, at will, draw unto himself a world completely vibrant with consciousness, consisting of a series of joyous exchanges that fuse in perfect unity, culminating in the flame that consumes all contingency and all unconsciousness. Thus the incomparable Wheel of perfectly unified multiple energies vibrates at an incredible speed, all the while remaining immutable.

This path also includes a series of experiences that are at once "signs" of the purifying path the yogi follows and phases of the vibration (spanda) he feels in the various centers[22] of his subtle body. These are: feelings of joy, trembling, a particular type of sleep, and fleeting moments of rapture. All of these are his reactions to Reality touching the centers one by one. And as long as he has still not mastered the centers, he bears these touches of reality with difficulty.

THE PATH OF COGNITIVE ENERGY

The path that sets the energy in motion exists on the level of knowledge that leads to union. It applies to those privileged beings who, blessed with a more powerful grace than that of the lower path, attain a fully inward-looking consciousness and an illumined heart.

If the divine path is that of transcendence and a reality without forms, the path of energy is that of great abundance and immanence. In this lies the great distinction between these two approaches. The divine path, in effect, concerns only Bhairava, the divine essence that enfolds all the dissolved and unified energies.

In great contrast, the path of knowledge encourages adoration of a personal God which corresponds to the universe, stressing divine qualities like majesty, omnipotence, and omniscience. And this God Mahesvara has innumerable qualities or energies through which he reveals himself, whether the devotee is aware of one or of many of them. "Mahesvara, endowed with all these energies, is all-powerful and free, because his activity depends upon nothing outside himself. Omniscient, omnipresent, and eternal, he possesses the energies of knowledge, differentiation, and activity. He freely manifests his energies in many ways, thus giving rise to the universe's diversity. His freedom, not different from his own nature, consists of creating diversity in unity and unity in diversity. By his cognitive

energy, he simultaneously brings into being the knowing subject and the known object. The differentiating energy manifests the glints and glimmers that are individuals and things, separate from absolute Consciousness and separate from one another.[23]

Abhinavagupta notes the difference between Paramasiva (the Absolute) and Isvara, the latter manifesting undifferentiated objectivity (prameya), without verbal expression and identical to consciousness. But in Paramasiva, there is no prameya, the flow of things being completely immmersed in him who is undivided Consciousness and bliss, pure unity characterized by repose in the Self.

Jili, as we will later see, makes a similar distinction between the unity of the Essence and the divine unity upon which all qualities depend.[24]

The obstacle to the expansion of an integral, free energy is no longer to be found within dispersed activities as it was before. It exists in polarized thought, vikalpa, the doubt, dilemma, or hesitation which paralyzes one's awareness and keeps one from continual contact with Reality.

To become convinced of Reality, one must replace one's rigid, dry ideas about it with its vital experience. Purified thought then becomes penetrating and insightful, capable of dispelling misconceptions.

The yogi begins by disassociating the structures of knowledge that are tied to language and upon which one's attachment to objects depends. He forges a path between two opposing ideas (vikalpa). When the energy which once nourished these structures has been recaptured, it becomes so intense that

it, in turn, erases duality. Thus one goes back to the source of conscious energy and shakes the ego's structures to its very foundation. The Self, free of all determination, recovers its universality.

But such work cannot be accomplished as long as that which feeds one's doubts and dilemmas still exists, e.g., the latent predispositions and deeply buried tendencies and complexes rooted in one's deep past. One must bring these residual traces to the surface in order to act upon them and, through a subtle discernment made possible by the energy, make them accessible and finally, dissolve them.

Zeal, ardor, and vigilance are indispensible in purifying consciousness of its last impressions of duality.

In attaining this goal, this path makes use of lucidity, a highly developed intuitive Reason (sattarka) capable of discerning a true master capable to teach the right path. This master not only assures liberation from bondage but also endows knowledge with its undifferentiated brilliance.

"Those who are knowledgeable" Abhinavagupta declares, "use the hatchet of intuitive reason, made extremely sharp, to chop at the roots of the tree of fatal differentiation; they thereby attain certainty." (T.A., IV. 13)

After an increasingly subtle investigation, they see only oneness, for their consciousness is clear, dynamic, and global. Purified intelligence reveals to them quite obviously the undifferentiated essence. At this summit, the sattarka experiences an awakening (bodha).

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Since this path tends toward simplicity and non-distinction, it is understood that all the practices described by the Yogasutras--prohibitions, postures, breathing exercises, the withdrawal of the senses and of thought, meditation, concentration, and even samadhi--are of no use to realize Consciousness. They serve only to eliminate polar tendencies, and, above all, to promote discrimination. In effect, every practice has as its objective the acquisition or perfection of something, and Consciousness is perfect in itself and has already acquired everything. Only knowledge based upon discrimination can help, because "it consists of an extremely acute dynamic awareness which becomes increasingly internalized," (T.A., IV. 86) and ends by rejoining pure science (suddhavidya).

Abhinavagupta considers withdrawal of the senses and of thought as an arbitrary and harmful exercise "which only makes stronger the bonds of that which has never been bound," that is, free Consciousness (92). True pratyahara consists in completely forgetting even liberation itself, because there are in truth no shackles that tie beings.

To the question, "What is the value of mentioning the limbs of yoga if they serve no purpose?" Abhinavagupta replies that each of them assists in attaining the higher limb and finally achieving true discrimination (sattarka). As for the limbs which concern the body and individual consciousness, they serve only to fortify the body or to obtain mental mastery.

But these limbs of yoga, including the highest, are absolutely ineffective as far as the essence is concerned, for in reality it is not the different limbs that lead to Consciousness,

but Consciousness which gives rise to yoga.

Abhinavagupta declares: "What is truly established in Consciousness can, through consciousness, be transmitted to breath, intelligence, and the body in the form of pranayama, etc. But the inverse process cannot occur." (IV. 97)

And he cites on this subject the Viravalitantra to show that it is not breathing exercises that sustain the absorption of Consciousness. On the contrary: "It is through the absorption of consciousness that the inhaled and exhaled breaths are immersed in Siva, pure and simple Consciousness, and the sun of life comes to the top of our own consciousness. This is called true deliverance, in which breath control plays no part." (T.A., IV. 89-90) Therefore all duality is dissolved in the Center or middle pathway and the yogi enjoys the conscious light. Furthermore, Abhinavagupta offers this advice: let us not therefore devote ourselves to breath control which does no more than exhaust the body. (91)

These practices are henceforth but the spontaneous behavior of free living beings and in this sense take on an entirely new meaning.

Utpaladeva sang of the same idea: "The great feast that is Your Union can be obtained only through putting aside the effort of meditation. Such is the true way that Lovers adore. Let it be mine forever!" (S.U., VII.4)

And al-Halaj: "It is You who are my entrancer. It is not prayer which enraptures me! Far from my heart is any notion of holding onto my prayer! Prayer...hides you from my eyes, when

thought allows itself to become encircled by my attention." (Diw. a. 35)

Contemplation of the wheel of the energies demonstrates how this path, which yields the highest spiritual riches, reaches the simplicity and unity of the Self. When doubts, rigidity, and conscious fluctuations disappear, the wheel of energies loses its slow, jerky movement and begins to turn at a prodigious speed, dissolving the last unconscious vestiges of duality. Then all the purified and intensified energies converge spontaneously beyond distinction into unity, fusing at their source, the wheel's calm center. The yogi capable of keeping himself in the immobile hub no longer perceives distinct spokes, diversity having dissolved in the vibrant, undifferentiated energy of the Self.

But if he directs himself towards the periphery (the perceptible world apprehended through his sense organs), his control of the wheel is relaxed. The wheel slows and the multiple energies reappear, tending to crystallize around the ego. He needs then to return to the center, in complete inwardness, and to open his eyes again to the universe without injuring his absorption in Siva. "If, with the help of the heart, you project sight and all the other energies simultaneously and in every direction upon their respective objects (color, odor, etc.), all the while remaining firmly planted like a golden pillar even in the midst of (your activities), you will appear as the One, the very foundation of the universe." (P.H., sutra 18)

It is not easy to remain at the center, so one must delve

into oneself again and again until the state becomes permanent. The yogi then discovers in his own heart a universal energy full of joy, accompanied by unbounded power.

Because of this practice, the universe having penetrated into Consciousness and consciousness into the universe, the mystic spontaneously enjoys true adoration, all his activity becoming devotional in nature. And even without preparation of the body, the attention, the breath, or the word, the various currents of the spiritual faculties, joined at the Center of divine Consciousness, can expand everywhere without harm/loss.

The great yogi stands firm in the immmutable Center of the universal vibrant Heart, where everything is necessarily pure, and where all things are equal. When he surrenders to the heart's pulsation, with its ebb and flow, he finds that the enslaving vascillation between two opposing poles (vikalpa) becomes a divine play of expansion and contraction in which he participates fully. "Praise to Him (Siva) whom the devotee, even when involved in the most varied states, contemplates with heart overflowing in Love," sings Utpaladeva. (XIV, 21)

Extraordinary is one capable of such adoration, who attains the Reality of the Self in its undivided nature. "The bee, and not the fly," writes Abhinavagupta, "appreciates the ketaka flower's perfume. Equally exceptional is he who, incited by the Sovereign, is involved in the supreme adoration of Bhairava without duality!" (T.A., IV. 276)

Having made light of the various rituals involved in worship, Abhinavagupta defines what he considers to be true,

total adoration:

"As for adoration, let it be accomplished only through those things which expand thought. The marrow of Consciousness is nothing but freedom, and freedom, but a mass of bliss. Thus, activities of adoration which look toward identification with consciousness can be described as those that bring joy to the heart. Whatever the substances or qualities, whether real or imaginary, they will lead to the Supreme Good if they are a source of joy."

"In order to venerate the supreme realm, let the awakened being offer juice that is distilled from the totality of things, and whose fullness is due to identity with Siva. It is this which I have often expressed in a hymn:

'Resting in the conscious Light which arises from the ultimate essence; and seeing through the immortal nectar, splendid and shining, I adore You, Who knows Your mystical secrets!'

'Constantly sprinkling the earthly receptacle, I adore You with drops from the juice of my wonderment; spiritual and innate flowers exude their own joys.'

'My God united with divine Energy, I adore You day and night within my own body, my heart the precious cup overflowing with the nectar of bliss.'

'I have thrown the heavy burden of discrimination from the heights. And I have pressed the triple universe with all its tastes and attractions in order to extract from it the juice. This universe is machined by the wheel of the heart and the flood that issues forth from it is the supreme nectar of the destructive Consciousness of birth, old age, and death. It is

with this nectar, in the guise of supreme oblation, that I satiate You night and day, Oh Supreme One.'"(T.A. XXVI. 54, 58-65)

The various practices of worship are spiritualized: "True worship consists of unification of the torrents of differentiated modalities that are identified with the infinite Consciousness of Bhairava, free and immaculate." (T.A. IV. 122)

"There is no oblation (homa) other than sacrifice of the entire universe including one's own body, its organs, its thoughts and objects. Which offering are poured into the fire of ultimate Consciousness, the illuminated heart playing the part of sacrificial spoon." (V.B., verse 149)

Yet more profound are the words of Abhinavagupta: "Without fuel, the blazing fire of all the sensory organs burns in us perpetually as the fire of consciousness penetrates the forms of the universe. These become more and more inflamed, thus bringing the oblation to fire." (T.A. IV., 201)

"For those who succeed in remaining calmly in this oblation, all the useless cacophony of becoming melts spontaneously, like a pile of snow in the hot season." (IV., 277)

Renunciation is here performed even in daily activities. Slowly one becomes detached from the ego by hurling the vestiges of duality into the fire of conscious energy. But this is still not the complete and definitive surrender that involves annihilation of the ego. Such complete abandon belongs to the path of Siva.

In discussing the behavior of renunciates who travel the

path of the energy, Abhinavagupta draws the following parallel: an untrained horse is attached to a post and circles the bumpy terrain, obedient to the horsemans's will until he becomes a well-trained horse capable of running anywhere. Similarly, consciousness leaves duality and becomes identified with Bhairava through various, roundabout ways--peaceful experiences, frightening ones, etc. (IV., 205-206)

Then everything becomes stabilized and unified: there is neither pure nor impure, duality nor non-duality. Thus, diverse practices--vows, initiations, pilgrimages, baths--are neither prescribed, for they do not lead directly to Siva, nor prohibited, for they cannot introduce the least fissure in undivided Reality. (213-217) Whatever the activity, the only requirement is to fix one's heart calmly on Reality, regardless of the method. Then, impurity is that which is far from Consciousness, and purity is that which aids one in becoming identified with it. (242-243)

Whosoever wishes to ascede to the supreme Reality, let him take the path that is closest to him, leaving aside all others. Here there is no constraint, for the Trika school proclaims the equality of divinities, treatises, and paths, all being Siva.

Master Eckhart cites the words of Saint Paul: "All men are not called to God in the same way." And further, "If your path is that which is closest to you, you need not go through numerous external works, nor through great suffering and privations. Quite simply, there is nothing very great in these. If you do not find anything like that in yourself, stay completely at peace and do not dwell upon it anymore." (P. 180)

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This path of immanence insists upon the harmony of a world in which the internal and the external are equalized, and which the divine energy transforms to the extent that it fully penetrates it. But even if the limits do widen to infinity, they do not fall away completely. The mystic does not lose himself in the "naked"[25] essence of the divinity (paramasiva); he remains at the level of the divine qualities inherent in the energy, such as immortality, power, majesty, etc.

On this subject, the Vijnanabhairavatantra says: "Eternal, omnipresent, without support, omnipenetrating, the sovereign of everything that is... Meditating every instant upon these words, he realizes their meaning in accordance with the signified being (Siva)." (stanza 133)

Although different in this from the path of Siva, the path of the energy could in fact lead there. Abhinavagupta shows how: "These who adore the omnipresent Lord by sharpening their thought upon one of his attributes (or on all reunited) expose themselves to the interior of their previously purified thought. They end by resting in the substrata of the attributed, where they are contained in their undifferentiated totality. Similarly, in perceiving an object, one first has a partial vision of its qualities, then a complete, undivided awareness." (l. 200) Thus, Siva can be revealed by his various energies or qualities, the energy being the means of identifying with Him: "Depending upon their proximity to the Consciousness of the adored being, some embrace the energies in limited number, others in unlimited number. This process has to do with the path of the energy,

belonging to differentiated thought; but there is no such thing in the divine path." (I. 70-76 and 207)

Utpaladeva expresses it clearly in these verses addressed to Siva:

"Even if your Self contains distinct attributes and even if it is attained by gradual means, it manifests itself purified of attributes, once and forever, to those who share Your Love." (XVI. 2)

If the yogi who follows the lower path arrives at the threshold of intuitive Reason and sound discrimination, the mystic, thanks to this discrimination, passes beyond all knowledge. At the threshold of the divine path, enjoying one of the most intense forms of grace, he is ready to hurl himself into the very Essence of the One, all his energies freed and harmonized. His one desire to escape--from dilemma and hesitation--is so intense that he enters into the higher path of the undifferentiated. But if the mystic benefits from a less intense grace, he does not leave the path of the energy; and if he becomes attached to contemplation of the divine attributes and still possesses self-absorption, his personal consciousness, although awakened, does not entirely disappear and he enters the universal Heart only at rare moments. Only with death does he ascede to Siva and enjoy universal glory.

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THE DIVINE PATH OR THE PATH OF THE WILL

The lower path involves several supports: activities of the organs, breathing exercises, enunciation of syllables, meditation, etc., while the path of the energy rests upon the cognitive energy of the mystic. It uses this energy as a springboard, but it never quite succeeds in leaving it, ultimately hurling itself into the One.

The path of Siva is a path without support, without effort, without recourse to the faculties. It is the path of pure desire, of naked intention. It reaches toward Siva only, not toward his energy or his attributes, and it does not depend on the energy in order to propel itself toward Him. In fact, for the jnanin who follows this path, the free energy of Consciousness is inseparable from Siva. It consists of an absolute act taken of its own initiative and dependent upon no limitations.

The path of nondifferentiation (abheda), devoid of distinction, determination, or particularity, is described as nirvikalpa. It is without difficulty, and without actual presence, for it precedes the distinction of subject and object. And it is thus above all personal activity, such as knowing, willing, and loving.

This path of overcoming addresses itself solely to the ardent being full of divine Love (bhakti) who aspires only to the simple, naked Essence. The grace which he enjoys is so abundant that it takes him beyond all intellectual certitude, even without his notice. And yet it is fully apparent, Reality grasped at the

very moment that it emerges, such that a powerful surge of the heart lifts him into the one Essence. Without living this first moment, without holding on to the heart's vibration, one cannot possess vigilant consciousness nor be established in the undifferentiated.

This surge owes its intensity to the fact that it does not encompass any division. From that moment foreward, he attains all, he knows all, is capable of all, since the totality is essentially undivided.

Since it is in the unity of this moment (the outburst) that everything is played out, it is understandable that the Siva Sutras places great importance on the flight towards the Absolute. The path of Siva is summarized: udyamo bhairava, "The outburst is the undifferentiated divinity" declares one of its aphorisms. (I, 5) The commentator adds: "This outburst is the emergence of the supreme illumination, the sudden flight of Consciousness in the form of an unbroken awareness of the Self, of an innate, internal fervor. As all the energies fuse within it, this outburst is bhairava--undifferentiated divine Consciousness--because it springs forth in beings who are overflowing with Love and endowed with vigilance regarding this interior Reality."

At this high level is bhakti, beyond words, the triumphant Love which forces the yogi out of himself and propels him toward the One. It has nothing in common with the love of the preceding paths that is entangled in duality. Not effusive, it is at the heart of pure aspiration, a surge of the whole being towards an

inexpressible God. Blind, as it were, this flood of love nevertheless possesses a keen vigilance, not the vigilance of understanding but that of an ardent heart which withstands even reverberations of the will.

The Saivite texts compare such an outburst to a devouring flame which leaps up spontaneously and consumes forever all traces of differentiation and the last vestiges of the ego.[26]

This act, the purest it could be, is completely relaxed. As soon as it appears, it is perfect and gives access to the absolute, beyond the workings of the temporal. Sudden, unforseeable, it is similar to a bolt of lightning that strikes the earth, but whose illumination does not disappear. Through it, the adorer becomes a "living liberated person." To such a person, samsara and liberation scarcely differ. The decisive realization of his essence has caused bondage to give way to total liberty.

His will, in fact, is a divine will, whole, present, effortless, with nothing of the casual or incidental, a will which is itself an imperative, not different from the infinite and sovereign energy of Siva. The word which designates it, iccha, also signifies desire, but this desire, understood as incitement, its creative source, is so absorbed by the absolute that it turns to Siva completely in an intense surge. It radically dispels all distinct apprehension, and it is raised to the divine undifferentiated Essence, free of any attribute, any quality.

Another aphorism of the Siva Sutras (I, 13) defines the nature of this very pure will as energy in its source. Iccha is

described as a young virgin, Siva's Beloved...virgin because it can only be pure Subject, never an object of enjoyment, i.e., being "for someone else." She escapes contamination of the subject-object relationship. Very young, ingenuous, she acts wantonly, her play consisting of emitting and reabsorbing the universe. Perfectly detached, she nevertheless ardently gives herself to adoration of the Lord and is identified with Him. In reality, she is nothing but the supreme Energy, as inseparable from God as are rays from the Sun or heat from the Fire.

Arriving at a similar union, with all his faculties gathered at the undifferentiated Center, the yogi who is established in the infinite and virgin energy sees the Fourth state expanding spontaneously over the three other states as a tidal wave inundates all limits and levels. Through the fusion of the internal and external, he attains equanimity (samata) which he discovers at the very heart of this surge. Equanimity, in fact, no longer comes from the great conscious movement of slow leveling which characterizes the path of the energy. It is now within the very source of vision, in the first glance directed towards the Self or towards the world. A slight fluctuation is sufficient to equalize all; and in this, the yogi discovers his glorious freedom. He then declares, with Abhinavagupta:

"Oh Lord Bhairava, this consciousness of mine dances, sings, and enjoys itself thoroughly, for since it has come to possess you, the Beloved, accomplishing the one sacrifice of equality so difficult for others, is now easy." (H.A., 51)

This sacrifice, called "of the equality," finally banishes

the rocky duality of becoming (samsara). The eternal and the fleeting, purity and impurity, illusion and Reality, in short, the multifaceted universe is reflected in all its splendor within the harmonious conscious Light that is always identical to itself.

The great yogi thus recovers his native glory. Its expansion brings a wonderment characteristic of the stages of this path. He contemplates all things from the immutable Center, by the light of unity, on the (inner) fascade of the universal Self.

And one treatise declares: when the faithful recognize the Self through the Self, it is within their own Self that this wonder is experienced. And Ksemaraja states that the yogi never ceases to marvel at the extraordinary and ever new magic that comes to him when he merges with undivided Consciousness. He never has enough of the uninterrupted bliss that he senses in himself. (S.S.v., I. sutra 12)

Rare is the hero whose love is spontaneous and free; when he is liberated from duality, he rejoins undifferentiated Consciousness in its initial vibration and succeeds in keeping himself there. (Bh., 40)

This path, which begins with grace, ends there in glory.[27] But is it not to himself that the yogi finally attributes the "very weighty"[28] grace that emerges from the depths of the Self. For at the heart of the will's vibration, divine incitement and human outburst coincide. On this level, grace, which is given and received in a single movement, is the essence of indeterminism.

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At the end of the third chapter of the Tantraloka, dedicated to the divine path, Abhinavagupta recalls succinctly the disappearance of the contingencies which are the basis for distinction between the different paths:

"The limiting conditions appear," he writes, "as soon as Reality turns from her freedom to the external."

259. According to the Masters, the Essence transcending these limited conditions (upadhi) is dual. Either these conditions have not yet appeared or they have ceased.

260. Dual also is the way in which they cease: calmly or by a violent[29], spontaneous maturation characterised by an insatiable appetite, like an ardent and ceaseless fire.

[According to the commentary, the first depends upon initiations, and the teacher's veneration. The second is an intense consumption of limitations, caused by the fire of Consciousness. And, when limitations have not yet appeared, it is a question of Reality escaping by any path. The progressive disappearance of limitations takes place by the paths of activity and knowledge; sudden disappearance, by the path of Siva.]

261. The latter, that of violent maturation with its consuming the fuel of differentiation, is especially worthy of transmission.

262. All things thrown violently into the fire of our own consciousness abandon their differentiations while feeding the flame of their own energy.

263. When differentiation is dissolved by this hasty maturation, the organs that have been made divine by

consciousness now savor the universe which is transformed into nectar.

264. These organs, once sated, identify their own self with the God Bhairava, the firmament of Consciousness, resting solely in the heart, Him, Fullness itself.

THE TRIPLE ASPECTS OF THE UNIVERSE'S REFLECTION IN CONSCIOUSNESS

268-269. The One to Whom the universe--all things in their diversity--appears as a reflection in his consciousness is the Lord of the universe. Possessing a total undifferentiated and eternally present awareness, he is the only one branded by the path of the Lord.

[This awareness of the I is fullness, for its overflow is the universe in its diversity. On this subject, one verse states:

"However little he tastes of this flavor, he whose conduct is noble and independent knows samadhi, yoga, vows, sacred words, and recitation to be poison."]

276-277. Seeing the various levels of Reality reflected without differentiation in his own Self, he attains the nature of Bhairava. And when he sees Bhairava himself reflecting in the mirror of Consciousness, that is sublime and without artifice, he who no longer has differentiated thought spontaneously becomes Bhairava.

Having arrived at the state of Bhairava, the yogi must dominate the triple activity of emanation, maintenance, and

reabsorption with respect to the universe:

280. "All proceeds from me (aham, I), all is reflected in me, and all is inseparable from me. This path of the Lord is a triple path."

The true Trika adept must become the master of these three aspects of the divine path.

1) In the form of creative emission: He is completely aware of the phonemes from A to HA when intuition springs forth: "this universe emerges from me, the I aham)."

283. "Manifesting the universe in myself, in the ether of Consciousness, I am the creator, immanent in the universe." To perceive this is to be identified with Bhairava.

2) In the form of maintenance, he recognizes: "This universe is reflected in me."

284. "All paths are reflected in me, their sustainer." Clearly, to perceive this is to be identified with the universe.

Thus, protecting the universe, he becomes its master and participates in universal Bhairava. This aspect is higher than the preceding bhairava which he discovered only in himself. At this stage, he tastes it always and everywhere since he has stamped his consciousness on the whole world.

3) In the form of reabsorption, the adept becomes aware that: "all that is me alone." Through the power of the formula of the absolute Self, he reabsorbs the universe into himself and penetrates into the peaceful state of universal Bhairava. He attains the Self in its fullness.

286. "The universe is dissolved in me, I who am full of the enzied flames of great Consciousness." To see this is to find

peace.

"I am Siva, this devouring fire which burns the dwelling into beautiful, infinitely varies elements (a dream), this flow of transmigration."

The third aspect of the divine path having been attained, the ultimate goal is also attained.

287. "The universe in its many aspects comes out of me, rests in me, and when it is dissolved, nothing more exists."

"He who sees the emanation, maintenance, and reabsorption of the universe to be indivisible because it is unified, such a person is radiant, having attained the Fourth state."

At this level, paths and procedures have no meaning:

288. "Rare are they who, purified by the supreme Lord, advance with confidence upon this supreme path where Siva's non duality reigns."

290. "Bathing vows, bodily purifications, mental concentration, recitation of mantras, paths, oblations, recitations, samadhi, and other practices to do with differentiation have no place here."

According to the ancient Teachers:

"In truth, when the ultimate Reality is ardently desired, all means are reduced to nothingness."

Utpaladeva also declares:

"Only love is worthy of appreciation in the non-illusory path of Siva. Neither yoga, nor asceticism, nor pious acts can lead to him." (I., 16)

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He therefore prays to Siva: "Oh, that at every moment the inexpressible life-giving taste acquired through the repeated summonsing of Your sovereignty might increase in me, and that the majesty of yoga and of Knowledge might leave me." (VIII., 2)

How does one characterize the highly favored being who progresses along this path? The first characteristic of one endowed with intense grace is simply the divine love (bhavabhakti), with which he is filled. It is the Teacher who transmits this grace directly. His word or his example suffice to make the disciple aware of his own Essence.

"(The Teacher) initiated in the divine path is manifestly in a state to transmit supreme grace, but upon one condition: he who is to find this grace must be capable of receiving it in the manner in which it is given." Of this manner, Jayaratha comments: "just as a torch is lit from another torch." (290-291)

THE ABSENCE OF ANY PATH (<u>ANUPAYA</u>)

The term <u>anupaya</u> designates the supreme conscious light, the incomparable and single Reality. In this case, since the negative prefix <u>a</u> takes its meaning from total negation, there is nothing one can say:

"In the absence of any path, how can one know that this Reality escapes all paths? And about those to whom it shines spontaneously, in truth, what can be said?"

But since this term can mean a very narrow path (<u>alpopaya</u>), or access to reality without any means, we can say a little something about it.

On this level, there is no paradox, no divine play, no return, no unveiling, no liberation. When all is consciousness, what can reveal Consciousness?

Immaculate beings, incited by the Teacher, immediately recognize "the essential kingdom as being incomparable and eternal knowledge."

To this path Abhinavagupta dedicates his second chapter of the Tantraloka: "Siva does not manifest because of the liberating paths; on the contrary, it is they who shine with His brilliance."(3)

"The quadruple form mentioned--the three paths and the non-path--that is assumed by pure Consciousness is none other than the very nature of the Omnipresent, and this Omnipresent is always surging forth."(4)

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"Since he shines in countless ways, some are absorbed in him gradually and others all at once."(5)

Very rare are those who circumvent all paths.

"...Immaculate beings consecrate themselves to the inaccessible bhairavian Consciousness, exempt from all paths." (7)

"Activity and yoga practices cannot serve as a path, for Consciousness is not born from activity. It is the reverse. Activity proceeds from consciousness."

Independent of conscious energy, activity is nothing.

"Conscious Reality shines from its own brilliance. Therefore, of what value are logical processes for making it known? If it did not shine thus, the universe, deprived of light, could not reveal itself, since it would be unconscious." (10)

"All paths, be they internal or external, depend upon Consciousness. How, then, could they reveal its access?" (11)

"O Lord! Your Reality is everywhere present and immediately evident. The ways by which one undertakes to find You can never uncover you." (Stanza cited by the commentator.)

"Internal path, external path, all is nothing but the marvelous innate Essence of Siva, his pure and simple luminous nature." (15)

Not only concentration and other means of realization, but also sensations and feelings are Siva. "Who else could live in this supreme Non-duality made of pure Light, in which means and end have no other bond but Light itself?"

In it, all is identified: Siva, the energy and the

individual:

"Duality, differentiation, non-differentiation, thus the Lord reveals himself, Conscious Light. In him, happiness, sadness, bondage, salvation, consciousness, and unconsciousness are only synonyms designating the one Reality, just as the terms jug and jar designate the same object." (18-19)

And yet:

"(This supreme kingdom) includes neither existence, non-existence, nor duality, for it is beyond the reach of language. It remains firm on the footpath of the inexpressible. It lives in the energy but is free of it." (33)

Those who live in the non-path perceive a single taste in all things, that of the Self:

"The circle of things, while remaining present in them, is dissolved on all sides in the Bhairavian fire of Consciousness." (35)

"For these beings, happiness, sorrow, fear, anguish, and dualistic thoughts melt completely in the single, undifferentiated, and supreme absorption." (36)

"Endowed with the hatchet that cuts to pieces all the restrictions of the treatises, their only task is to accord grace." (38)

This inaccessible Reality, free from all means, has as its single characteristic the immediate power of direct transmission from Teacher to disciple.[30]

The disciple whose heart is very pure easily recognizes the Teacher who, immersed in supreme Consciousness, will allow him

to attain full Consciousness without means of approach. He renders homage to this Consciousness, being careful to avoid making it an object of knowledge or adoration. He is the beneficiary of the most intense grace.

But in the non-path, in the strict meaning of the term beyond all grace, he participates in the divine glory in which his Teacher lives. He is free then, though not "saved", for "in the undifferentiated and in the absence of a path, who then is liberated, where, and how?" (III. 273)

Several of Abhinavagupta's stanzas summarize his teachings on the Absolute, Incomparable Reality, the All towards which there is no means of access:

"From the perspective of Absolute Reality, transmigration does not exist. How, then, can there be question about shackles for living beings? And since this free being has never been enchained, efforts to free him are in vain."

"The illusion of a shadow of an imaginary demon, or a rope mistaken for a serpent produces such unfounded confusion. Therefore, take nothing, leave nothing; deeply established within yourself, just as you are, happily pass the time." (2)

"In the Inexpressible, what discord can there be, and how might one differentiate the adored, the adorer, and the process of adoration? And in truth, for whom and in what manner can there be progress? Who would enter (into the Self) by degrees?"

"Oh Marvelous One! This illusion, although it be differentiated, is but ConsciousnesswithoutSecond. Ah! All is very pure Essence, selfevident. Thus, forget your useless

concerns." (3)

"When Consciousness arises such that one has immediate contact with one's self, (at this time) real and unreal, the eternal and the transitory, that which is tainted by illusion and that which is purity of the Selfall appears radiant in the mirror of Consciousness."

"Having recognized all that in the light of the Essence, You whose grandeur is founded in your intimate experience, enjoy your universal power." (8)

[1]Somananda's <u>Sivadrsti</u>, I, 3738. Consider in this regard the words of Angelus Silesius: "All this is play that God is engaged in." (II, 198)

[2]S.D., I, 37.

[3]The Persian <u>sufi</u> Mawlana DjalalodDin Rumi writes: "You are a pearl hidden in a handful of straw mixed with mud. If you wash your face of this mud, oh what a beautiful face! And what will happen then?
You are the son of a king...
If you seek the kingdom of your father, oh miserable one! What will happen then?" (op. cit., p. 235)

[4]Master Eckhart, citing the words of the Evangelist: "Know that the kingdom of God is near" specifies, "Yes, the kingdom of God is within us." Then he comments: "Now, you should know how the kingdom of God is near us. We should consider this idea carefully. If I were a king and didn't know it, then I wouldn't be king. But if I had the firm conviction of being king, or if all the men with me were similarly persuaded and I were convinced of their conviction, then I would in fact be king, and all the kingly riches would be mine...Similarly, our beatitude is wed to what we recognize and know (<u>bekenne</u> and <u>wizze</u>) of the sovereign Good, which is God." (Pf., p. 220221) And Ruysbroeck: "Without knowledge, we cannot possess God... If we could be happy without knowledge, so could a stone (which possesses no knowledge whatsoever) also be happy. If I were master of the entire world, what would it matter to me if I knew nothing of it?" <u>L'Anneau ou la pierre brillante.</u> Translated by the Benedictines of Saint Paul of Wisques. Vromant, Paris and Brussels, vol. III, 1928, p. 257.

[5]Abhinavagupta lived near Srinagar at the end of the tenth and the beginning of the eleventh century. He had numerous teachers who familiarized him with the doctrine of the Agamas and its various schools, as well as with the majority of the Indian philosophical systems, including Buddhism. But the teacher whom he venerated above all was Sambhunatha, who initiated him into the mystical life. Abhinavagupta expresses his veneration for Sambhunatha in the opening stanzas of the Tantraloka.

He wrote commentaries on the works of his most famous predecessors, especially Utpaladeva's <u>Isvarapratyabhijnakarika</u>, Utpala himself being a disciple of Somananda, author of the <u>Sivadrsti</u>.

Although quite famous throughout India for his brilliant views on aesthetics and drama, his unpublished other works and commentaries have been overlooked for a long time. Published only within the last century, they are now somewhat better known, and have been the subject of translations into various European languages. The reader will find various excerpts from some of his original works and commentaries in this article. The Tantraloka is a vast compendium of the whole of Saivite philosophy and mystical practice.

[6]On equality, cf. here, p. 265.

[7]One has thus several sanskrit terms: citsakti relates to anupaya, nonpath in the strict sense of the word; anandasakti relates to anupaya, the lowest path; icchasakti relates to sambhavopaya; jnanasakti relates to saktopaya; kriyasakti relates to anavopaya.

[8]Cf. I. P.v. Vol. II, pp. 131132, or 11, 3, 17. On the subject of the intimate embrace of God which replaces the efforts of imagination that is no longer disengaged from objectivity, H. Corbin cites a passage from Ibn 'Arabi: "When mystics finally experience that God is the same being they previously imagined as their own souls, they act as if in a mirage. Nothing has been abolished from their being. The mirage remains an object of sight, but they know what it is, i.e., that it is not water." (Fotuhat, II, 339, cited in Im. p. 246, note 124)

[9]I. P.v. Vol. II, p. 131132, or II, 3. 17.

[10]Svasvarupa can also be translated as "one's own essence" but here it has to do with the Superessence, the intimate (sva) form (rupa) of the intimate (sva).

[11]Samavesa, textually copenetration or interpenetration.

[12]I.P.v., III, 2. 1112.

[13]Nirupayasamavesa. In describing the person who has reached Reality, a sufi exclaims: "A Wacil has not arrived at such a sublime level without having seen...that his own intimate being is that of Allah...,without having entered or exited from Him." p. 31 This same Treatise on Unity specifies that Allah neither enters into anything nor does anything enter into Him: "He is not found in anything, nor is anything found in Him by any exit or entrance whatsoever." p. 24

[14]Without cinta, mental obsession, or "thoughts continually turned to God", as in the path of consciousness. Master Eckhart, who also emphasizes a vibrant, internally present God, writes that true possession of God "rests upon a feeling in the heart...upon an orientation of the will toward God. Not upon a fixed, permanent idea of God ! Man should not be satisfied with anidea of God, for when the idea disappears, so will God. But one should have a real God, beyond the thoughts of men and beyond all creation. This God will not disappear, that is, unless one voluntarily turns from him. A person who thus posesses God, essentially, takes God as divine, and God shines before him through all things. Everything allows him to taste God, and in all things is God reflected in him..." (P. 165)

[15]One can read in some of the Masters: thanks to a Revelation due to the guru.

[16]Suddhavidyavastha in the first case, and suddhavidyapramatr in the second. Cf. Madame Guyon, Les Torrents

p. 116: "God first presents himself as states of light, then as a state of taste, and then as a condition of confused and indistinct thoughts. Finally he presents himself permanently and the soul establishes itself there forever." Taste and condition of confused thoughts correspond to bhavana in the path of the energy. One finds the same distinction with the sufis, here p. 74. Avicenne writes that the soul first has sparks of light, these become more and more frequent, until they are finally merged in a single, permanent light.

[17]Master Eckhart also wrote: "if nature in its action begins with the weakest, God in his action could hardly begin with the strongest and the most perfect!" (P. 242)

[18]Cf. p. 149.

[19]This takes place in the path of knowledge and then in that of the will. Cf. here, pp. 187188, 190, 264265.

[20]As for the fourth pranayama, it occurs only in the middle pathway, the exhaled breath is directed towards the highest center at the moment of the void, and the inhaled breath, towards the heart at the moment of fullness. At the point of suspension, breath and thought remain very calm, without the least oscillation (cf. S.S.v. III.6).

[21]The aranis are used in lighting the fire of vedic sacrifice. Here the inhaled and exhaled breaths, by their churning light the fire of kundalini or the ascending breath.

[22]Cakra, it is a matter here of the ascending breath of spiritual energy, called kundalini. A description of it is given in the Tantraloka (V. 4362).

[23]Cf. here p. I.P.v., vol. II p. 261, Karika 7.

[24]Cf. here p. 205.

[25]According to Ruysbroeck's expression.

[26]According to the description of the divine path, a single breath suffices to accomplish all, it happens that in practice, the limitations do not break apart all at once. Nevertheless, they do cease spontaneously under the pressure of renewed impulses.

[27]The soul enveloped in love discovers its royal nature and cries: "Mine are the skies, the earth, the nations; mine are the just, the sinners...all things are mine; God himself is mine and for me since Christ is mine and entirely for me. Thus, my soul, what might you want, and what do you seek? All is yours, and all is for you."

"Do not lower yourself below that, do not stop at the crumbs which fall from the table of your Father. Be at ease, and glorify yourself in that which makes your glory! Hide yourself

in it and rejoice, and you will fulfill the aspirations of your heart." Oracion del alma enamorada. Saint John of the Cross. Obras de San Juan de la Cruz, p. 817. Madrid, 1954.

[28]Here, p. 259.

[29]Vipaka, instantaneous assimilation, inevitable burning of the divine fire.

[30]Master Eckhart writes, "The more a master is wise and powerful, the more his work is immediately realized...and the more simple it is." (P. 39)

[31]H.A., Huit stances sur l'Incomparable, p. 57.